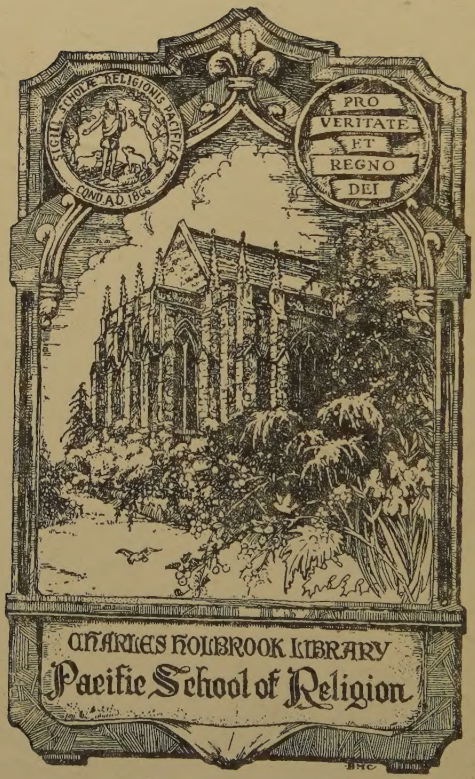
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THE PSALMS;

WITH NOTES,

CRITICAL, EXPLANATORY, AND PRACTICAL,

DESIGNED FOR BOTH PASTORS AND PEOPLE.

BY

REV. HENRY COWLES, D.D.

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"Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I unless some man should guide me?"—ACTS VIII: 30, 31.

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PREFACE.

ANY just interpretation of the scriptures must assume that they were written so as to be readily understood by the average mind of their first readers. Especially must this be true of compositions prepared for the public worship of the sanctuary, to be sung or listened to by minds of the ordinary grade of culture, such as were the masses of the Hebrew worshiping congregations. It follows that these Psalms will become plain to us just so far as we are able to place ourselves in the circumstances of their authors and of the people of their age. To do this requires a good knowledge of their language; also a familiar acquaintance with their history and life, and, so far as possible, with the special history that belongs to each of these several Psalms—embraced under the questions of *author; date;* the *occasion* of its being written—the *facts* to which it alludes; and the *purpose* or object had in view by the author.——These remarks will indicate the points to which special attention has been given in the preparation of these Notes. I have sought diligently to locate these several Psalms in history as one of the first and most important means of reproducing the circumstances under which they were written. A table in the Appendix presents very briefly the leading points of this external history of the Psalms. More extended discussions will be found introducing each Psalm.——I have also aimed in my Notes to represent the exact shades of thought expressed in the original Hebrew, especially when the received English version

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fails of this expression. More extended discussion has been allowed to the Psalms which are at once difficult, controverted, and important, *e. g.*, those which are supposed to be prophetic of the Messiah, and also those which have been sometimes arraigned as expressing malign imprecations against the Psalmist's enemies. ——The bearing of the practical points upon Christian experience and upon the great moral duties of man to his Maker are touched briefly and suggestively—not exhaustively.——With the prayerful hope that these Notes will shed light on points otherwise dark, and possibly disclose beauties and truths otherwise unnoticed, and thus secure a deeper and more intelligent interest and a richer profit to the diligent study of these sweet songs of Zion, this volume is respectfully laid before the public, being "designed for both pastors and people,"

BY THE AUTHOR.

Oberlin, Ohio, March, 1872.

PSALMS.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

The Psalms were written and were compiled into their present form for use in the public worship of God in the Jewish sanctuary. From a very early age poetry and song were called into service to express with greater pleasure and profit the sentiments and emotions of pious men toward their Infinite Father. Their aid was invoked in sacred worship. The earliest sacred song on record was prepared by Moses and sung by the children of Israel over the fall of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea. We have it Exod. 15: 1–21.——If the question be asked, Why did the leaders of Israel under those circumstances think in poetry and utter their thought in song? It may fitly be answered, Because their hearts were full, and their full hearts *must* pour forth their emotions, and *would* have the help of poetry and song. Nothing less would suffice. Warm, fervent emotion demands such expression, and refuses to be satisfied without it. Those saved men and women could not help uttering praise to Almighty God for his strong hand uplifted to their salvation. Their excited minds delighted to lift their thought to the loftiest conceptions of the imagination [which is to make poetry], and such praise, put in poetry, yet needed the aid of music in song. No other style of speech than poetry could fitly express their exultant, lofty triumph in Him, and no other utterance of poetry could do justice to their emotions save that in song. This is the ultimate answer to all questions as to the origin of sacred song. It is the natural expression of deep and strong emotion. Deep feeling finds relief, as well as pleasing culture and development, in the language of poetry and in music.——Somewhat later, poetry and song appear in their triumphal form in the history of Deborah and Barak; and in the minor key over the death of Saul and Jonathan. How large a place they held in the stated worship of God in the tabernacle

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before the age of David we have no means of knowing. The historic records bring sacred song to view only on special occasions. To David is, doubtless, due the credit of reviving, and, by example and impulse, almost creating the psalmody of Israel. His soul was full of song, and, indeed, of poetry as well. He entered into the worship and the praises of God with all his heart, and, therefore, found poetry and song congenial to his own spirit. Hence, he naturally inferred that the same means would promote the devotions of his people.——Sacred history makes frequent allusion to his skill and power upon the harp. But not content with the harp alone, he invented other instruments of music, and enjoined their use in sacred song. "Four thousand Levites praised the Lord with the instruments which I made" (said David) "to praise therewith" (1 Chron. 23: 5). The prophet Amos (6: 5) speaks of those who "invent to themselves instruments of music like David." One historian (1 Chron. 25: 5, 6) says of the development of Hebrew song: "God gave Heman fourteen sons and three daughters" (a family of singers); "all these were under the hand of their father for song in the house of the Lord, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman." Not inappropriately David bears the distinctive honor of being "the sweet Psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23: 1). Well might he speak of it as his chief glory: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23: 1–3). To him, and to his associates and successors, is the world indebted, under God, for these treasures of sacred song. It is a vast debt. The treasures are, beyond measure, rich and precious. They witness to the deep Christian emotion of good men who lived three thousand years ago. Here are their experiences, their trials, their straits, their conflicts against temptation; and here, also, are the records of their precious faith in God, through which they gained the victory over the world and the wickedness thereof. Here stand recorded their exultant songs of triumph in the day of their deliverance; here the outflowings of their grateful hearts in praise to the power that redeemed, and to the loving-kindness that remembered, them with plenteousness of mercy and salvation. These forms of uttering devout affection are so rich, so full, and so various, that Christians in all ages have delighted to find here the very words prepared to their hand in which their souls, bur-

dened or lightened, might speak before the Lord of their wants, or of the fullness of their joy when those wants were supplied. It is not strange that Christians in all later ages should feel peculiar interest in using these words in their own worship, public or private, to express similar feelings. It will always be pleasant to think that God moved holy men of old to these utterances of earthly want, of faith in God for promised help, and of thanks for delivering grace. We unconsciously account their experience of God's mercy as his pledge of like mercy to his people in every age under their similar wants, and in answer to the same faith and prayer for like help in time of need.

In our Hebrew Bibles, the Psalms are divided into *five books*—the closing Psalm in each of the five respectively being the forty-first, the seventy-second, the eighty-ninth, the one hundred and sixth, and the one hundred and fiftieth. Remarkably, these Psalms end with a special doxology—the first three with a double *Amen*, and the last two with *Hallelujah*. This arrangement is, probably, as old as the compilation of the Psalter itself. ——It may not be possible to give, with certainty, all the reasons which induced the compilers to arrange these Psalms in this five-fold division, and the several Psalms in their order, as we have them in each book. It is, however, generally conceded that the first book (Ps. 1–41) is composed entirely of Psalms of David, and was compiled first in the order of time, and, probably, soon after David's death. The second book (42–72) involves the difficult question whether, in case of Ps. 42–49, the superscription "for [or "of"] the sons of Korah" names them as authors or as musical performers. I favor the opinion that they are spoken of as *authors*. The series Ps. 51–71 were manifestly written by David. The 72d and 45th are usually attributed to Solomon. Inasmuch as Ps. 46 belongs, probably, to the reign of Hezekiah, it may be assumed that this second book was compiled at or near this date. The statement (Ps. 72: 20), "The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended," seems to show that the compiler supposed that no more Psalms of David were extant. Yet one Psalm ascribed to him appears in the third book (Ps. 86), and seventeen in Books IV and V, viz.: Psalms 101, 103, 108–110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138–145.

Book III apparently comprises, for the most part, Psalms prepared and brought into use in and near the time of Hezekiah.

Book IV contains the remainder of the Psalms that appeared

down to the time of the captivity—chiefly of the age of Josiah and Jeremiah; and Book V those which were either written or brought forward from an earlier age after the restoration.

It thus appears that this book of Psalms, as we have it, was a *growth*—the accumulation of religious odes composed during the lapse of several centuries, and hence a natural product of the piety and talent on the one hand, and of providential circumstances on the other, which make up the religious history of the covenant people during those most favored ages of their national life.

The interest felt in this subject will justify a somewhat more full development. Let us compare Jewish Psalmody with Christian in point of *historic growth*. It is well known that Christian Psalmody has been largely the product of special epochs; *e. g.*, we have one installment from the early Christian centuries—the work of the fathers in that memorable Christian age. We have another installment from the pious men of the middle ages—Bernard, Aquinas, etc. Some contributions come in from the age of the German reformation; more and richer still for our mother tongue, from the revivals of the eighteenth century—the age of the Wesleys, Watts, Cowper, and Doddridge; and, finally, an immense accession from the quickened piety and the missionary zeal of the nineteenth century. Comprehensively our Christian Psalmody has been the natural product of revival periods.——The same is true of Jewish Psalmody. The age of David was remarkably one of religious revival. An earnestly pious king became under God the means of a quickened religious life among the people. True, it took on to some extent a martial tone, and developed itself in the faith and heroism of bloody wars against the idolatrous enemies of Israel; but it was none the less a revival of the religious element, and manifested itself delightfully in the public worship of the sanctuary. Sacred song became a necessity to supply the natural want of so much quickened religious emotion; so here we have the first installment of Psalms and odes suitable for public religious worship.——The next religious epoch, fruitful in fresh songs for the sanctuary, was precisely the next considerable reformation, viz., that under Jehoshaphat. The great military event of his time, sketched so vigorously in 2 Chron. 20, gave occasion, apparently, to two very stirring odes (Ps. 47 and 48, and, perhaps, Ps. 83). The second book of Psalms (42–72) was probably brought together and added to the Psalter shortly after

this revival period.——More extensive and thorough still was the great reformation under Hezekiah. It sent forth its inviting call to the long-time wandering brethren of the ten tribes—a fact which manifests itself in some of the new songs of this king's reign. The fall of the proud Assyrian before Jehovah's uplifted arm gave occasion, as we might anticipate, to other and most sublime songs for the sanctuary. The age of Isaiah, of Micah, and of Nahum, might be expected to make very considerable additions to the Psalmody of Israel. Of this we find ample traces as we study the historic dates of the Psalms, especially of Book III, which book may have been compiled near the close of Hezekiah's reign.——The reign of Josiah dates the next great reformation, and became, consequently, the epoch of the next considerable accession to Jewish Psalmody. A very large portion of Book IV must be dated within this reign and the life of Jeremiah and Habakkuk, extending into the earlier years of the captivity. The power of Isaiah's prophetic thought and spirit appear in some of the odes of this age, as we shall have occasion to notice. ——Lastly, the revived spirit and life of the restoration under Zerubbabel, Joshua, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah, gave birth to the last contribution to the volume of Jewish Psalmody. These contributions appear in Book V (Ps. 107–150).—— Thus, comprehensively, we have the instructive historic fact that religious revivals have, for the most part, given birth to the religious songs of all ages; first, the Jewish, last, the Christian.

The more particular questions pertaining to the author and date of each Psalm must be examined in connection with their exposition. These questions have great interest and very considerable importance. If these points can be satisfactorily ascertained, they enable us to reproduce, in a measure, the history and the circumstances under which each Psalm was written. In so far as we are able to reproduce those circumstances, we shall see more clearly the pertinence and beauty, and shall feel more deeply the force, of the allusions made to events then passing. In order to feel as the Psalmist felt, we need to see his situation and to appreciate the circumstances by which he was surrounded. To bring out these circumstances in their just light is one of the first duties of the commentator, and one of his chief contributions to the benefit of his readers.

This introduction ought not to close without some notice of an-

other point which the study of these Psalms will continually suggest, viz.: What illustrations and developments of God and of his truth had been then already made so as to be accessible for religious culture? In what shape were the waters of the spiritual life then flowing for the people of God; where were the fountains thereof; and how could thirsty souls gain access and find their supply?——We of this Christian age find these fountains largely in the earthly life; the loving words and promises; the sacrificial death and the ever-manifested *presence* of Jesus through his Spirit. But they of the older Jewish age had *these* things only in the tiniest prophetic germ. Rarely in these Psalms do the writers seem to turn to these germs of prophetic truth for the quickening of their spiritual life. What *did* they do? What sources of religious instruction and of quickening impulse were accessible to them?——Comprehensively, they had two sources: (1). They saw God in creation and in nature. As we may, so might they look abroad of a starry night, and "consider the heavens the work of divine fingers" (Ps. 8); they could listen and hear the heavens "telling the glory of God" (Ps. 19). Or they could look forth upon the fresh face of the earth and see the valleys covered with corn, the pastures with flocks, and the hills girding on joy (Ps. 65).——But (2) more and better than this, *the long ages of God's covenant people had a history.* God had come down and talked with men of faith, and had condescended to enter into covenant with them. He had given them his name "*Jehovah*"—the faithful God, the maker and fulfiller of promise. It is interesting to see how constantly the authors of these sacred songs fall back upon the revelations of God in history; how naturally their thoughts recur to the promise of Canaan to the patriarchs, to the wonders wrought in fulfillment thereof in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in the desert, and in the conquest of Canaan; how constantly their faith seeks and finds support in those marvelous "works" of the right hand of the Lord. At these fountains of truth they drank all along the otherwise unwatered desert of their earthly pilgrimage. These wonderful facts were good material to work into poetry and song as well as into the warp and woof of the religious life; and hence we shall not be surprised to find allusions made often, yet not too often--allusions simple yet always impressive, and sometimes sublime—to those wonderful works of their own ever-faithful Jehovah.

PSALMS.

PSALM I.

Obviously this Psalm was either written for an introduction to the Psalter or was selected by the compiler as one adapted to this place. There is no good reason to doubt that David was its author. It breathes forth and foreshadows the spirit of the entire book in this special respect, celebrating the blessedness and prosperity of the truly good man in this world and inferring his corresponding fruition in the world to come. He is put in contrast with the wicked both in his life and in his destiny.——We shall often have occasion to notice that the sentiment of this Psalm has a somewhat special adaptation to that age of the world in which present retribution was far more the common law of God's providential administration than it is in our times.

1. Blessed *is* the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2. But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

The force of the original is better given by reading, "O, the blessedness of the man!" or "O, how blessed is the man!" etc.—— He is first described negatively. He does "*not* walk in the counsel of the ungodly"—according to their principles and aims; does "*not* stand in the way of sinners," associating with them as being of kindred spirit; does *not* sit in the seat of scorners. Standing, walking, sitting, as here used, group together all customary forms, not precisely of human activity but of social life, in none of which does this good man evince any co-operation or even sympathy with the wicked.——On the other hand, considered positively, he has delights, yet they are not in the ways of the wicked, but in the law of the Lord: he has thought and study, yet not on themes congenial to the wicked, but upon the precious law of his God. In both his life and his thought, therefore, he is utterly unlike the wicked.—— The tense of the Hebrew verb in this verse is past, yet implying the present. Such *has* been his way of life; such it is still.——The

reader will notice the underlying assumption throughout this Psalm that the outer life is a certain index of the inner heart. "A man is known by the company he keeps"—and *loves*.

3. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

The charming figure of a tree, ever green, thrifty, flourishing and fruitful, sets forth his prosperity. In Palestine, vegetables of annual growth might fail through drought; but the tree (*e. g.*, the fig, olive, or palm), deep rooted, beside living waters, whose leaf never withered, and its fruit never failed, became a true type of the good man whose life could never be a failure—whose work was evermore sure to prosper and fruit well.——The Hebrew words for "rivers of water" carry the mind to artificial channels cut for irrigation. The fact involves the labor and care of the husbandman, suggesting God's unceasing care in providence over his faithful servants.——In the last clause, the figure gives place to the fact prefigured: "Whatsoever he shall do, he will make to prosper." The case of Joseph is in point. "The Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand." "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man" (Gen. xxxix: 2, 3, 23).——Perhaps it should be suggested that this connection between moral uprightness and external prosperity was more apparent and more invariable under the ancient economy than under the present. There were obvious reasons why a theocracy, so largely external in its relations, should involve a specially large amount of present retribution. Such Psalms as the thirty-seventh and such passages as Deut. 28, present these views forcibly. There are also obvious reasons why in the early ages of the race, the matter of righteous retribution from God should be both proved and illustrated to the very eyes of men, before God should say much in regard to retribution in another state beyond the grave, out of human sight. Else how could he hope to gain the confidence of men in any thing he might *say* about that unseen world?

4. The ungodly *are* not so: but *are* like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

The ungodly are not so, either in their life, their spirit, or their destiny, for all these points seem to be involved in the contrast—the latter not least. They can not be compared to a tree, or even a shrub, or the tiniest of vegetable growths; but find their symbol in *chaff*, seen and known mainly as separated from the wheat, because not only worthless but injurious, and driven away, therefore, before the winnowing wind on the hill-tops, or, as elsewhere suggested, burned in the fire of destruction. So the incorrigible sinners in God's universe must be violently torn away from among the righteous and doomed to hopeless ruin. Having proved them-

selves worthless, and even mischievous, in the sphere God made them to fill, their end must be as their works—their character giving shape to their destiny, which can only be destruction "without remedy."——This figure, chaff, to describe the doom of the wicked, appears forcibly in Job 21: 18 and Ps. 35: 5; Isa. 17: 13, and, not least, in Matt. 3: 12.

5. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

The question respecting the proper reference of *the* judgment, whether to providential judgments inflicted in this world, or to the final judgment-day when this world shall end, seems to be fitly answered by the demands of the context. The judgment here thought of is the same sifting, punitive, and destructive process set before us in v. 4 under the figure of "the chaff which the wind driveth away." As thought of by the Psalmist, its first installment comes often in this world, yet so only as foreshadowing the far more dreadful doom which awaits the wicked hereafter. They are separated from the assemblies of the righteous (so the parallel clause affirms); they can never *stand*, *i. e.*, stand up in strength and with the divine favor, before God in his days of judgment, whether in the present life or the future. Their doom is to be disowned of God, condemned, and made monuments of his eternal justice.

6. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

In the passage, "the Lord knoweth the way," etc., the leading thought seems to be upon that sure and perfect discrimination with which the Lord will sever between the righteous and the wicked. He knows perfectly how the righteous have lived, what spirit they are of, and what destiny he proposes to award to them in the end. He knoweth their "way" both of earthly life and of future reward.——But the way of the ungodly is ruin, and nothing else. Their very *way* itself shall perish—a strong form of asserting that their path leads to perdition, and will surely land them there.——Thus utterly unlike are the godly from the ungodly, in our world, and so it is infinitely right, and therefore sure, that their respective destines, as they are contrasted often in this world, will be far more certainly and totally so in the retributions of the world to come. At the stand-point of view held by the Psalmist, the righteous were seen, not only upright and regardful of God's will, but happy and prosperous; while the wicked are seen mainly at the point of their final doom—"chaff which the wind driveth away," even in the retributions of the present world. It behooves us, at least, to make the momentous inference: If such be the contrast both in life and destiny between the good and the bad in the partial developments and ret

ributions of time, how much more fearful the contrast must be under the perfect judgment of the final and eternal state!

PSALM II.

This Psalm stands without the author's name, but must be ascribed to David, for he is the author of all the other Psalms in this first book (1–41), and, therefore, doubtless of this. The imagery is drawn from his own personal relations to God as king of Israel and from God's promise to him of the Messiah in the line of his children—a fact which witnesses to his authorship; and, finally, it is specifically attributed to him by the apostles (Acts 4: 25): "Who by the mouth of thy servant *David* hast said, Why did the heathen rage?" etc.—as in this Psalm. As to its *date*, we need only say, *after* the scenes of 2 Sam. 7, and probably not long after. The Psalm treats, not (as some have claimed) of David nor of any other ancient Jewish king, but of the Messiah alone. Its imagery and phraseology are indeed drawn from the case of David anointed as king over Israel on Mount Zion, and raised up of God to subdue the adjacent hostile nations; but we must refer the Psalm to the Messiah and not to David, because, (1.) It can not apply throughout to David without the utmost violence; (2.) It does apply to the Messiah fitly, naturally, and in harmony with numerous other Messianic prophecies; and (3.) It is explicitly referred to the Messiah by the inspired apostles (as above, Acts 4: 25–28), where they find the raging of the nations and the combination of kings against the Lord's anointed fulfilled in the gathering together of Herod, Pilate, the Romans, and the Jews, to crucify the Lord Jesus. Also the repeated reference to v. 7, "Thou art my Son;" *e. g.*, Heb. 1: 5 and 5: 5, and Acts 12: 33, and the remarkable announcement of the fact at his baptism and transfiguration, as shown in Matt. 3: 17 and 17: 5; and, yet further, the reference to v. 9 in Rev. 2: 27 and 12: 5. The proof is most abundant that the inspired apostles saw the Messiah, and him only, throughout this Psalm. Appealing to it in proof that Jesus of Nazareth is the very Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, of course they assume this to be a prophecy of him. In a case of such vital moment, where the points to be proved are entirely fundamental to Christianity, to deny the authority of the apostles as interpreters of prophecy is to deny their inspiration.

The course of thought in this Psalm has extraordinary brilliancy, beauty, and force. The prophet sees the nations combining in hostile mood against the Lord's anointed (vs. 1, 2); hears the very words that breathe forth their spirit of rebellion (v. 3); then sees the Almighty reposing serenely on his lofty throne, condemning the puny endeavors of his foes, speaking terror to their hearts, and affirming the regal authority of his anointed Son (vs.

4–6). Then the Son himself appears, witnessing in the very words of the Infinite Father to his own supreme dominion (vs. 7–9), upon the basis of which the Psalm closes with a solemn admonition from the prophet to yield in submission, obedience, and love to this glorious Messiah, and thus escape the ruin of all persistent rebels and gain the blessedness of an humble trust in his name.

1. Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

The nations are seen all astir and deeply agitated with the spirit of rebellion against the Lord Jehovah. *Why* is this? says the prophet; of what use; and what can be the reason for these vain endeavors? The original implies that they have been and still are raging in their tumultuous efforts; are now plotting and will continue to plot this utterly futile and self-ruinous rebellion. As seen in vision these rebels are the nations and peoples of the earth. The prophet is deeply impressed with the folly and madness of their opposition against the great God.

2. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his Anointed, *saying*,

This verse explains their case more fully. They take their stand and devise their schemes against Jehovah and against his anointed Son.——The original word here is *Messiah*—the Anointed One, to which the word *Christ* is the Greek equivalent. The idea of anointing comes from the Hebrew practice of inducting their high priests and their kings into office by this ceremony. The history gives prominence to the anointing of Saul (1 Sam. 10: 1), of David (1 Sam. 16: 13), and of Solomon (1 Kings 1: 34, 39); and says of David, "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward." Anointing was the symbol of this divine unction, and, therefore, makes the names *Messiah* and *Christ* specially significant and appropriate in the case of him to whom God gave the Spirit "not by measure."

3. Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

The prophet first sees these hostile kings and nations in the tumult of their rebellious plans and movements; then with a deeper view of their spirit he hears their very words. They spurn the restraints of God's authority. "We will not have this man to reign over us." The Messiah, anointed king in Zion, to rule with most mild and beneficent sway, "his yoke easy and his burden light," they intensely hate and scornfully repel. Alas! for the folly and the guilt of such rebellion! It is precisely *sin*—sin in its very nature and essence; the heart lifting up itself against the perfectly reasonable authority and most righteous

claims of the infinite God, and none the less for his inexpressible goodness and perfect purity; none the less because he is our Great Maker and Father—the glorious giver of every good. Against such a God rebellion is simple madness—the madness, not of real insanity, but of supreme folly.

4. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.

Is Jehovah afraid of this uprising of rebellion? The prophet sees him sitting in the heavens, infinitely high above the reach of their puny arm, not agitated like those raging foes, but serene and undisturbed; indeed, looking with contempt upon these puny and really contemptible swellings of rage in creatures so insignificant. It need not surprise us that the rage of the wicked against God should appear in his view contemptible for its infinite weakness. If it were not that his pity deplores its wickedness, how could he have any other feeling than contempt for its utter imbecility and folly? He might even enjoy the thought of his own infinite power to make the wrath of man work out his own praise and the good of his universe. Apart from the divine pity for the sinner, a just sense of sin, as the puny, abortive, and mad uprising of man against the infinite God, would legitimately awaken the very feeling here expressed. Let every guilty sinner think of it and be confounded in the thought of his own unutterable folly as well as guilt.

5. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

6. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion.

From describing what the Lord does, the prophet passes to what he says. Filled with indignation toward these adversaries of his Anointed Son, he will speak to them in his wrath and will *terrify* them in his stern displeasure. The word for "vex" has rather this sense of striking terror into their guilty souls by the assertion of his divine purpose to enthrone his Son in Zion and give him the nations as his subjects—all persistent rebels to be broken with a rod of iron. This is the amount of his solemn declaration: I have enthroned my Son as king on Zion, my holy mountain. *I have done it:* no mortal power can undo or withstand it! "He must reign till he shall have put all enemies beneath his feet!"——The reader will notice that David's anointing and inauguration furnish the imagery and the phraseology; yet none but the Messiah fills the sense.

7. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

With inimitable beauty and pertinence the Messiah himself now appears and speaks, witnessing to his sonship and kingship, and to the constitution—the grand charter of rights—under which

this fallen world is given to him as his empire. "Let me speak now concerning the decree," (Heb.)—the great ordinance or statute of heaven under which the Son of God is enthroned as king. "Jehovah said to me, My Son art thou: this day have I begotten thee."——Obviously sonship is here thought of as the ground of kingship—the son succeeding rightfully to the father's authority as king. "This day have I made thee such," recognizing thy sonship by giving thee this authority of king.——Construing the language thus in harmony with the drift of the context, there seems to be no occasion here to raise any metaphysical questions respecting the eternal generation of the Son of God. Can it be supposed that the Psalmist or even the Spirit of inspiration, speaking through him, had any reference to the birth-hour of the Messiah, considered as the time when his existence began? The plain thought seems rather to be: This day, by anointing thee as King on my hill of Zion, I have recognized thee as my Son. This enthroning is my public and solemn *recognition* of this relation—the relation being essentially eternal in the past, but never brought forth to the knowledge of created minds till this momentous inauguration as king. So Paul understood this verse, for he finds it fulfilled in Christ's resurrection and consequent ascension and enthronement in heaven. (See Acts 13: 33).

8. Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

Having been proclaimed king, the next step is the dower of a kingdom. Who are to be his subjects, and on what conditions shall the new king receive them? To these points our verse speaks. His subjects are the nations of the earth, the same obviously who are seen in the opening of the vision as raging against his authority. Given to him in answer to prayer, and moreover given him as his inheritance and possession in the sense in which Israel was God's inheritance and his peculiar people, they must be considered here as given him to become mainly his submissive, trustful, and beloved people. It can not be supposed that the grand charter of Messiah's great commission signifies only this—The nations given to thee as thine own, only or mainly to destroy them. Jesus himself would teach us far otherwise than this:—"The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke 9: 56). "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3: 17). The apparently different view given in the next verse (v. 9) will be considered in its place.——Next as to the conditions of this gift. "Ask of me." If it be your desire, all the nations shall be yours. Nothing thou canst ask is too much for thy rich Father to give. May we suppose that this expressed condition follows the usage of royal fathers conferring royalty and its munificent gifts upon favored sons; or perhaps,

that it comes from the case of David himself, raised up of God to be successful in subduing the nations to his scepter *according to the faith* he should have in the infinite resources of Israel's God? However the phraseology may be accounted for, we may best take the obvious meaning for the true one, viz.: that in the legitimate sense in which Jesus offers prayer to the Father, this asking was truly the antecedent condition of his receiving this largest possible gift—the nations en masse, the people of the wide earth, for his inheritance and possession. "The kingdoms of this world to become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" [anointed]. As already said, these nations* are the same whom the prophet saw (v. 1) raging in their rebellion against the Lord. Given to Christ, they will come under his royal sway—sweetly submissive and joyfully reposing in his pardoning love if they will; but terribly destroyed if they persist in mad rebellion. This is the constant teaching of Christ and of his apostles: "He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." "To you who believe he is precious; but to them who are disobedient, a stone of stumbling"—to stumble over to their fatal fall.——Elsewhere the Scriptures indicate that Christ's people when they come into real and full sympathy with him, blend their prayers with his as conditions precedent for the conversion of the nations to Christ.

9. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Some readers will ask: Is it not the fair sense of this verse that all the nations promised to Christ as his inheritance and possession are given him only to be destroyed?——To this I answer: It is probably due in part to the salient points of David's own sway over the hostile nations—Philistia, Syria, Moab, Ammon and Edom—that the language of this verse contemplates the subject nations as being crushed by physical power rather than saved by moral. Moreover, this view is in keeping with the leading thought of the Psalm—these nations seen in their malign rage against Jehovah and his anointed Son; and the Lord asserting his infinite right to reign, and giving dominion to his Son that he may reign to the subjugation of every foe. This is one of the main points in this Psalm. Yet as shown above, v. 8 must contemplate the masses of the nations as converted, to become Christ's true inheritance. The last three verses assume most clearly and delightfully that there is mercy most abundant for the guiltiest rebel who will submit to Christ and be a rebel no more. These "terrors of the Lord" are here for the very purpose of persuading men to be wise and to submit while yet pardon is possible.——The verse before us must therefore by no means be construed as proving that the nations of the world are given to Christ only or even mainly to

be destroyed. We can not even infer from this Psalm that the lost will be the mass, and the saved the few isolated exceptions. It should be borne in mind that David is a foreshadowing type of Christ, not as to *every* point in his mission and work, but only as to some special points, and these, mainly the points made prominent in this Psalm. David reigned on Zion hill—a king in most respects after the very heart of God; yet mostly representing the Great Messiah, not as an atoning Lamb; not as a Savior pardoning sinners; not as developing a glorious moral power for the conversion of enemies to friends; not as bringing forth to human view the matchless love of God, and sending his Spirit to make this manifested love a power to melt hearts of stone to flesh;—but quite in another line, viz., to subdue hostile nations by the strong arm of war, causing God's chosen people to rest in peace from foreign assailants; and then reviving the worship of God in his earthly sanctuary and ruling in righteousness for the general prosperity of the land. At the era of David, God had work for a warrior-chieftain who should be strong in the Lord to put down the enemies of Israel; and hence it was in those aspects mainly that he stands here as the representative of King Messiah. But this does not even propose to give us the chief work of the Messiah—much less, the whole. Beyond all question, the doctrine of the entire Bible, the New Testament and the Old, is that Jesus becomes King and Lord of all, to bring rebels to penitence and penitent souls back to purity and blessedness; but to give the incorrigibly impenitent their righteous doom—remediless ruin. Who will not bow in submission must fall beneath his rod. Justice demands this and Jesus will execute it. Whosoever will may come to him for life; but whosoever will not have life must have death!——It suffices therefore to say of our passage and indeed of the whole Psalm that it contemplates as its main theme the case of Christ's enemies in hostile league against him, but sure to fall beneath his rod unless they will bow to his scepter. The moral purpose of the Psalm is to impress the wicked with fear of the world's great King and Lord, and to assure them that their wrath and rage against him are worse than vain—there being nothing but absolute ruin before them in that line of policy, and their only hope lying in prompt submission.

10. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

With such views of the ineffable majesty and power of King Messiah before the mind, nothing can be more appropriate than this exhortation to be wise and to bow submissively to his scepter. It is addressed specially to the kings and judges of the same nations who are seen in the opening verses in hostile stand against the Lord's anointed. To become wise implies (and most truly)

that sin is pure folly—senseless, irrational. "Be instructed;"—consent to take advice and give heed to wise counsel. "Serve the Lord" reverently, with becoming fear of his dread judgments:—so may ye rejoice (with hope) in his forgiving mercy, for the issues are momentous, and a trembling solicitude befits men coming back from such rebellion. Mingled emotions of hope and of fear are surely not inappropriate.

12. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish *from* the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him.

"Kiss the Son," according to the usage of those times in recognition of royal state. So Samuel poured anointing oil upon Saul's head, and *kissed* him, saying, "Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance?" (1 Sam. 10: 1.) "Lest he be angry"—if ye refuse him this rightful homage. "And ye perish from the way"—failing of the way of life; or, perhaps, perishing *in your path*, just where ye are walking, *i. e.*, suddenly.——In the next clause the translation, "when his wrath is kindled but a little," fails to give the sense of the original. The word for "when" usually means "*for*," indicating the reason why. And the word translated "but a little," much more naturally relates to *time* than to the degree of this enkindling. For his wrath kindles *soon*, suddenly, within a little. This is a most forcible reason for immediate submission to his sway. He does not bear long with persistent, abusive rebels. The honor and stability of his throne can not endure such insult beyond a certain brief limit of long-suffering. It is death to abuse his patience beyond that brief limit. With no delay give him the submission of your hearts, lest ye fall, never to rise—fall in your very pathway; for his wrath kindles suddenly.——"Blessed are all they who put their trust in him;" and this blessedness may be yours, in place of that doom of woe and ruin. It becomes yours as the fruit of true submission to Messiah's sway.

Thus closes this sublime and solemnly impressive Psalm. Comparing it with the first Psalm, it ends where that begins—with the blessedness of the righteous. Like that, it makes prominent the heaven-wide contrast between the righteous and the wicked in respect to both present condition and future destiny. Like that, its great moral purpose is to commend true piety; to dissuade men from the ways of sin and rebellion; and to press them to submission to God as the path of life and blessedness.

PSALM III.

The introduction, "A Psalm of David when he fled from Absalom his son," opens this Psalm, and may properly be considered a

part of it. These introductory clauses, prefixed to a large portion of the Psalms, stand in the Hebrew text; were probably written by the several authors or by the original compilers, more probably the latter; and are regarded, for the most part, as historically reliable. They usually give us the very facts we need in order to locate the writing of the Psalm in the author's personal history and experience.——In the present case, the rebellion of Absalom, the uprising of the people under him, and its utter failure, find place in the historical books (2 Sam. 15–19). Far along in the forty years' reign of David (the precise date not given), after his sons had reached the years if not the maturity of manhood, and after the infirmities of age had induced, apparently, some negligence in his judicial duties, Absalom, a fast young man, of pre-possessing person and ambitious soul, ingratiating himself into favor with the people (in the language of the historian), "stole their hearts," and then made a bold dash for the throne itself. The masses of the people (strangely, perhaps heedlessly) lent themselves to this conspiracy. David thought it prudent to flee from his royal city, to rally his friends on the east of the Jordan, and stake his kingdom on the fortunes of a field-battle. In the result God gave him victory, a penitent people, a firmer throne, and a new experience of his own enduring love. At what point in this series of events we are to locate the writing of this Psalm is not entirely clear; but, apparently, most of it before the final victory over the hosts of Absalom and while yet the exiled monarch was walking, not by sight, but alone by faith in Israel's God.

1. Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! many *are* they that rise up against me.

2. Many *there be* which say of my soul, *There is* no help for him in God. Selah.

The first and most painful impression forced upon David's heart under the fearful tidings of this rebellion was of its wide extent—the many thousands of Israel who had madly rushed into it and set themselves against his throne. "There came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom" (2 Sam. 15: 13). The sudden flight from the city assumes that the masses of the people are in this rebellion. The language of Hushai to Absalom in council implies it: "Whom this people and all the men of Israel choose (*i. e.*, for their king) his will I be," etc. (2 Sam. 16: 18). "Therefore, I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered together unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude," etc. (2 Sam. 17: 11). This was indeed a terrible crisis. A nation rising in arms against their legal sovereign; the head man in this rebellion a son against his own father! Then, also, more painful than all the rest, was the irreligious aspect of this uprising; for David was the anointed of the Lord, and the spirit of the rebels stands out in the words he puts into their mouths: "There is no salvation for

the old king in his God!" How fast the various and sometimes conflicting thoughts must have flashed through David's mind! Of the one sort were his comforting assurance that God did certainly call him from leading his father's flocks to be the leader and shepherd of his people; that this same God had many a time delivered him from trouble and given him peace and rest despite of bitter and mighty foes; and that he had in the main honestly sought to serve the Lord his God. But other thoughts would flash upon him—of his great sin in the matter of Bathsheba; of his ungodly son Amnon, murdered by a brother's hand, even the hand of this very Absalom, of his own body begotten, now a traitor, with no fear of God before his eyes—suffered in divine Providence to become a terrible scourge to the kingdom, the household, and the heart of this aged king. Did these naturally appalling facts suggest the heart-sinking fear that his God had forsaken him?——Hear what he says: "Lord"—*i. e.*, O, thou *Jehovah*, the ever-faithful God, the God of our fathers in all the ages past—"Behold, and see how many there are now in this uprising against me!" Hear them say, "His God will save him no longer!" Surely thou wilt mark the spirit of these words, so painful to me; so reproachful to thee.——"Selah" calls for a pause in the recitation or chanting of the Psalm, inviting the reader to reflection and the choir (it is supposed) to a rest in the musical performance.

3. But thou, O LORD, *art* a shield for me: my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

His faith fails not. Though the nation seems to be in arms against him, and his own son heads them in this rebellion, still he will believe in the Lord his God. Thou, O most faithful One, hast been and art still my buckler all round about me, covering my whole person from the deadly shafts of battle; thou art my glory in whom I have rejoiced and even exulted as my greatest and best Friend; thou hast been evermore the lifter up of my head, when else I must have sunk to rise no more: certainly I must, I will trust in thee in this terrible emergency!

4. I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

The original gives us the verb "cried" in the future tense, implying his settled purpose evermore to cry to God for help in his trouble. "I said, With my voice to the Lord will I cry;" and "then he heard me from his holy hill." According to the form and the spirit of the ancient system, all pious suppliants turned toward Zion hill as the dwelling-place of their God. To them he manifested himself there, even as under the gospel age, we think of God as manifesting himself in Christ and we turn to him for his help in time of need.——Here another pause is appropriate for reflection.

5. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

In form this seems to be a statement made after the scene had passed. In spirit it is most expressive of the calmness and repose that came of his faith in God. In such peril of life and under the immense responsibilities of a king for his whole people, a very slight wavering in his faith would let in such apprehension and consequent agitation as must have banished sleep. But he testifies of himself—"I laid me down and slept sweetly: I awoke refreshed; for the Lord sustained me." This reminds us of his words elsewhere—"Thou preparedst a table before me in the presence of my enemies"—so that I ate quietly in the very face of their array against me (Ps. 23: 5).

6. I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set *themselves* against me round about.

With God on my side and his resources of wisdom and power pledged in my behalf, I will not fear those myriads of people whom the chiefs in this rebellion have set against me on every side.——The word "themselves" is without authority. The original rather implies that these ten thousands of people were put in this hostile attitude by *others*—the leaders in this conspiracy.

7. Arise, O LORD; save me, O my GOD: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies *upon* the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

"Arise"—as if he had been sitting in repose while this terrible conspiracy was being concocted; but the straitened suppliant feels that now he must implore God's interposition for help.——"Save me, O *my* God;" mine by covenant; mine by the full choice of my soul; mine by long years of trustful service on my part and precious mercies on thine. For I have this assurance of relief to-day, that thou hast ofttimes interposed to smite down my foes; therefore thou surely wilt again.——Smiting on the cheek and breaking in the teeth, conceive of his enemies as savage beasts of prey whose terribleness lay in their powerful jaws and piercing teeth. To break these teeth thoroughly was to disarm them for mischief. So God had disabled his enemies.

8. Salvation *belongeth* unto the LORD: thy blessing *is* upon thy people. Selah.

Salvation is of the Lord: it cometh evermore from him alone! From him it does surely come to his waiting children in all times of need.——Most pertinently this sweet Psalm closes with the prayer—"Thy blessing be upon thy people!" So be it evermore! God the salvation of his people forever and ever!

Of the many thousands along the ages who have read or sung this Psalm, making its precious words of faith and prayer their

own, but very few have been in circumstances of want and peril so severe and extreme as those of David. Making all due allowance for the fact that each one's own trials seem to himself of the very sternest sort, it must yet be obvious to our reason that as to most of us, our enemies are few while David's were many; our perils trivial, while his were real and fearful; the strain upon equanimity in our case ought to be small, while in his it was prodigious. Then let us consider that the grace which proved so adequate for him must be infinitely ample for each one of us.

PSALM IV.

This Psalm corresponds with Ps. 3 so closely both in its general course of thought and in several special expressions (compare 3: 4 with 4: 1 and 3: 5 with 4: 8) that it may safely be assumed to bear the same date and to refer specially to David's experience in connection with the rebellion of Absalom.——He cries to his God for help (v. 1); expostulates with his enemies (v. 2); and exhorts them to consideration, repentance and righteousness (v. 3–5); contrasts his own joyful and peaceful repose in God with their persistent but fruitless endeavors after perishing good (vs. 6–8).

The "chief musician" to whom this Psalm is intrusted may have been a choir-leader or the leading singer, *i. e.*, the precentor; or perhaps the solo performer accompanying the instruments. The circumstance that fifty-three Psalms are committed to him—so many and no more—seems to favor the theory that his service was special and not universal, *i. e.*, he did not bear this part in *all* the songs of the temple. But it is very difficult if not even impossible to arrive at certainty in regard to the precise forms of Hebrew music in the temple worship.——"Neginoth" specified the musical instrument to be used.

1. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me *when* I *was* in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

"O God of my righteousness" is equivalent to, O my righteous God. The suppliant is conscious of his own integrity in the great question at issue between himself and his enemies; in this assurance of his heart he practically says: "I know God will vindicate my cause as his own, since really it is his own," and therefore I can appeal to him as my ever-righteous God—my Defender and Avenger.——Thou hast on former occasions brought me forth from straitness into a large place; therefore I will trust thee yet and for evermore; have mercy upon me now and hear my prayer.——The Hebrew words, "in distress;" "hast enlarged me;" conceive of one cramped, straitened, shut in so closely as to make escape apparently impossible, yet with God's help brought

forth with ample range for flight and escape. Arab life, and indeed oriental life generally, associates peril with straitness, but safety with free scope for flight. To this day the Arab relies for his protection, not on city walls or fortified castles; but on his vast deserts and his fleet horse or dromedary. "Straitened," he is an easy prey: "in a large place," he defies his foe. David had practical experience of this when hunted down by King Saul.

2. O ye sons of men, how long *will ye turn* my glory into shame? *how long* will ye love vanity, *and* seek after leasing? Selah.

The original is very abrupt: "Sons of men, how long . . . my glory to shame? Will ye love vanity . . . will ye seek lies? The ellipses are well supplied in the English version—How long will ye account my glory as only my disgrace? How can ye think that my God who is my real glory is only my reproach? Or that my faith in him which is the noblest element in my character and life, is really my disgrace? How long will your heart love this vain attempt at rebellion and seek to pervert all truth and right into falsehood and wrong? For, treason is falsehood; rebellion is perjury—the most intense form of lying. "Leasing" is an obsolete English word for lying.——The men here addressed—"Sons of men"—were chief men, princes, perhaps the head men of the tribes, who seem generally to have gone into this conspiracy with Absalom. The Hebrew has various words for man; one indicating man as of the earth, frail and weak; another, man as strong, gigantic; and again another, man as of noble rank. The latter is used here.——Selah, meaning pause, invites to reflection upon the thought just presented, and here, very pertinently. Why should ye, men of noble rank, be so unmanly as to account my real glory to be only my disgrace? How can ye so pervert the reality of things? How can noble men either think or do a thing so mean?

3. But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

But know ye that God hath no sympathy with your notions of what is one's glory or disgrace. You think it my disgrace that I have sought the Lord Jehovah and trusted him for help in all my straits. Know ye that Jehovah has always distinguished with peculiar honor the truly pious man—the law of his realm being: "Them that honor me I will honor" (1 Sam. 2: 30). Therefore I know that the Lord will hear when I call upon him.

4. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

It would be quite within the usual significance of the first verb*

here to render it—"rage, but sin not;" *i. e.*, do not sin in thus raging against the Lord's anointed. Paul quotes it from the Septuagint in this sense (Eph. 4: 26): "Be ye angry and sin not"—*i. e.*, sin not by the indulgence of anger; never let the sun go down a witness to your wrath.——But it is also in harmony with the primary sense of this verb to translate with our English version: "Stand in awe;" let your soul be impressed with a wholesome *fear* of the great God! The verb always implies agitation, great excitement; but as to the character of this excitement, it takes a somewhat wide range, so as to embrace fear as well as anger. Fear is the better sense here. It relieves the passage of the harshness and apparent incongruity of *enjoining* anger.——"*Talk* to your own heart;" listen to the inward voice of conscience; hush the din of the outward world and think of God; think of your great guilt before him.——Thus the Psalmist exhorts his guilty persecutors to consider their ways, repent, and escape the judgments of the Almighty.——Selah, a pause for reflection, is specially pertinent here.

5. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

Sacrifice to God only in righteousness, not in hypocrisy, not in the midst of your schemes of wickedness. So and only so can you fitly put your trust in the Lord. It avails nothing that you profess or even assay to trust him while your hearts are in sin and your offerings are in all unrighteousness.

6. *There be* many that say, Who will show us *any* good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

Many are saying here and now in this grand conspiracy—"Who will show us good?" Who will give us the new happiness we seek under our new king? So they: but David's heart seeks good in God alone: "Lord, lift thou the light of thy countenance upon us:"—*that* brings the joy of heaven to our souls. In the phrase "Lift up the light of thy countenance," there may be a double figure—that of lifting up the face upon one as opposed to turning it away in displeasure; and that of causing light to beam on one in darkness. The prescribed formula for the blessing from the priest (Num. 6: 24–26) has this twofold expression: "The Lord make his face shine upon thee;" "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee." Full of beauty and force is this thought of God lifting the sunlight of his face upon a soul, otherwise in the gloom of darkness. David means to say that other men, *e. g.*, those treacherous enemies of his, may seek their good elsewhere and anywhere else they please; but for himself it is an all-sufficient joy if only he may have peace in God and the sunlight of his favor.

7. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time *that* their corn and their wine increased.

Thou, God, hast put more gladness in my heart than they have when their harvests are most abundant and their souls are most merry in feasting and wine.

8. I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Nothing could better express the sweet and perfect repose of faith than this. No matter for the danger to my throne or the peril to my life; my soul shall still rest in God, my Refuge—rest so completely that I shall lay me down and sleep in peace, for with God for my Helper, and all the universe besides against me, I shall dwell in safety. God alone, God with no other refuge or friend, is simply sufficient to ensure my salvation.——And this experience is for me, let each reader say, as truly as for David. It stands here of set divine purpose for the people of God in every age to read and to sing; to meditate upon and to transfer to their own case and appropriate each to his own soul in the midst of whatever trials, persecutions, dangers. The heart that is consciously upright before God, honestly and humbly seeking his favor above all things else, may trust in his protection and in his love forever. Such walking by faith is morally sublime. It has a grand power to lift up and ennoble human character.

PSALM V.

This Psalm, like the two that precede it, is pertinent to the circumstances of David when driven from his home and throne by Absalom in revolt. It is supposed, with some probability, that this entire series of five Psalms, beginning with the third, pertain to that revolt and to the varied experiences of David amid those scenes. The fact that the third locates itself there, and that the seventh was occasioned by the words of Cush, the Benjamite (who may be same with Shimei) favors this opinion, especially when coupled with the fact that in many cases a subsequent Psalm, without the usual introductory notices of author and occasion, is a continuation of a preceding one in which these points are given.—— Sundry features of this Pslam, to be noticed as they occur, favor its reference to the times of Absalom.——The words "upon Nehiloth" are obscure. The choice of construction seems to lie between that of Gesenius, "upon flutes," wind instruments, *perforated*, as he takes the Hebrew root to mean; and that of the ancient versions adopted by Alexander and others who derive it from another root which means to *inherit*, with the sense, *concerning inheritances* or destinies, *i. e.* concerning the diverse lot of the righteous and the wicked. The latter is best supported.

1. Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my meditation.

This prayer invokes the attention of God, first to his words, and next to his thoughts—the deep musings and workings of his mind. In his view God looks specially on the heart. Prayer to God should always recognize this precious truth—that God thinks of and cares for the deep sorrows of our soul and their out-going expressions of imploring supplication.

2. Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

"My cry," the word being commonly used for an outcry of distress. Pertinently, David, himself a king under God, addresses Jehovah as his own King and his own God, making this recognized relation a ground of his plea. Since I take the Infinite God as my God and my King, he will hear my cry.——Hear me *for* I pray unto thee. I look nowhere else for aid, but I do cast myself upon thee in prayer and trust. His faith clings to the divine arm, reasoning thus: He who hath so promised and who hath so invited his creatures to trust in their God alone, can not fail to hear their cry in their time of need.

3. My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct *my prayer* unto thee, and will look up.

The Hebrews sometimes speak of doing things "in the morning," meaning by it rather *earnestly* than *early*. Perhaps both ideas are involved here—the latter more surely. The first thing when the day opens and my refreshed powers turn anew to my life-work, I will lift up my voice gratefully to God my preserver, imploringly to God my benefactor.——What can be more fitting? Why not begin each day in communion with God?——In the original word, "direct," lies a tacit allusion to the sacrificial system in which this is the technical word for *arrange in order*, the wood upon the altar, the flesh upon the wood, also the shew-bread upon the table. David's thought therefore is this: *As* the priests arrange all sacred things and oblations in due order before the Lord, so will I as each day opens adjust myself—my thoughts, my thanksgivings, and my supplications before God.——"I will look up," *i. e.*, to see blessings return upon me in answer to my prayer. I take a waiting, expectant attitude toward God. This word naturally implies and expresses expectation of coming good.

4. For thou *art* not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.

The Psalmist means not only that God has no complacency in wrong, but that he is utterly displeased with it. Evil, in the person of evil-doers, shall not dwell with God—shall not come near to him to be at home in his presence and to experience his favor. In this conviction, David is sure God will never be on the side

of his persecutors—will not befriend them in their schemes to dethrone himself.

5. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

The "foolish"—rather the proud who love to display themselves and to *shine* before others' eyes. However lofty their pride, however exquisite their beauty, or gorgeous their display, they can not stand before the pure eye of God. Thou hast abhorred all evil-doers, and wilt forever. The history of God's past abhorrence of sinners confirms his conviction that God will utterly abhor them in all the future.

6. Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

Passing from general statements of sin to specific, he names lying, deceitful, and blood-thirsty men, such being now specially combined to expel him from his throne and country. This treason of Absalom resorted to falsehood and slander against the king; involved treachery and perjury, and of course contemplated nothing short of blood as the price of success. Such evil-doers God must abhor, and therefore must destroy.

7. But as for me, I will come *into* thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: *and* in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

"As for me," my lot is in contrast with theirs. "In the multitude of thy mercies" (not on the score of my special merits), I will come into thy house, the temple, with my joyful thanksgivings. The original puts the "mercy" in the foreground. "In thy great mercy I shall be permitted to come," etc.——"Worship *toward* thy temple," since the Hebrew worshipers might not enter into the most holy place, but stood without, offering their reverent worship toward that august but vailed presence.——This allusion to his assured return to Jerusalem applies pertinently to his transient exile when driven out by Absalom's uprising. The reader will recall with interest David's plaintive words as they appear in the history (2 Sam. 15: 25, 26). "If I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again and show me both it and his habitation: But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I; let him do unto me as it seeemeth good to him." At a later hour, in writing this Psalm, the uncertainty of this "*if*" had given place to an assured expectation.

8. Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

Lead me forth out of my present straits; guide all my steps in thy perfect wisdom. Do this also "*in thy righteousness*," *i. e.*, in thy justice; blast the purposes of my wicked enemies, and so deliver me.

9. For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part *is* very wickedness; their throat *is* an open sepulcher; they flatter with their tongue.

There is nothing firm, reliable in their mouth. Not only outwardly but inwardly they are utter wickedness—false to the very core of their heart. Their throat is like a grave standing ever open, yawning to devour—the grave being thought of here (as in Prov. 30: 15, 16) as one of the things that never says, "It is enough." As a figure, the grave may be either an insatiate destroyer or a receptacle of all things loathsome. The former use is to be preferred here.——The last clause reads literally, "They make their tongues smooth," *i. e.*, for flattery and by its practice. ——This verse is quoted pertinently by Paul to the Romans (3: 13, 14) in proof of the intense depravity of human hearts.

10. Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

Such intense wickedness precedes and foreshadows destruction, and draws it down upon their own heads. Hold them guilty, O God; let them fall because of their malicious counsels; or, perhaps, let them fail of executing their schemes, and so let them bring ruin on themselves; cast them forth from thy presence and favor in (and because of) the multitude of their sins, for they are in rebellion, not more against me, their legitimate sovereign, than against thee, their infinite Lord and King.——This is not malicious imprecation; it is not David moved selfishly to curse his enemies, considered as only his own, but it is David, the rightful sovereign of the nation, conscious of acting under the great God both of Israel and of all the nations of the earth, jealous for the honor of his Master, accounting the wickedness of those traitors more as rebellion against God than as treason against his own earthly throne; identifying himself with God, and invoking his interposition for the honor of his name and the vindication of his justice.——And now can any complaint lie against the spirit of these words? *Ought* not the all-perfect God to hold such sinners guilty and treat them accordingly? And ought not every soul that loves God, and justice, and the well-being of the universe to stand with God in this? approving his judgments upon the wicked, sympathizing with his abhorrence of all sin and wrong, and rejoicing that he will not let the incorrigibly wicked escape their deserved doom?

11. But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

Naturally and inevitably the joy of the righteous stands over against the woe of the wicked. The judgments that bring down

upon the wicked their just doom bring deliverance and salvation to the righteous. David is saved because Absalom and his fellow-traitors fall. God's interposing arm brings both results. When traitors against God and man meet their doom, all men loyal to God and his cause may fitly rejoice. Joy that God reigns is always legitimate—always glorious. It is sad that men and devils *will be wicked;* it is not sad that, being wicked past all cure and even all effective restraint in a free world, they should eat of the fruit of their own doings, and that God makes their example of woe and ruin a glorious power toward holiness and blessedness in his universe.——Thus much in exposition of what are so often called the imprecatory and vindictive Psalms, it is fit should be said, and is of the utmost consequence that all men should understand. Let us beware lest in taking part with the wicked we be found fighting against God.——The same subject is discussed more at length in Ps. 109.

12. For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favor wilt thou compass him as *with* a shield.

"*For*" involves the argument that by virtue of his very nature and promises God must, and therefore will, bless the righteous. Let the righteous rejoice, *for* God will certainly bless them. In this there can be no failure.——Thou wilt cover him all round about with thy manifested favor, as the ancient shield covered and protected the warrior's person.

As said above, there is good ground for assuming a primary reference in this Psalm to the rebellion of Absalom and his party. It would seem, however, to have been written, not as a first thought, but rather as an after-thought, upon those scenes. In reference especially to his feelings toward those conspirators and their guilty chief, the reader will note that David's first thought as to Absalom was quite unlike what stands forth so distinctly in this Psalm. His first emotions were those of an agonized father, appalled, it may be, with the horrid crime of his son, but agonized with his awful death, in his sins, under the wrath of the Almighty! With only the human side toward him, he wailed aloud: "O Absalom! my son, my son; would God I had died for thee, O Absalom! my son, my son!" (2 Sam. 19: 4.) But, remarkably, in all the Psalms that were subsequently penned to record the impressions and to expand the moral lessons of that entire scene, not one trace appears of these merely human sympathies with the beautiful but hardened and guilty Absalom. It would seem that David's after-thought gave God the ascendency and merged those outbursts of parental emotion in the purer stream of his divine sympathies. He came to think more of God and less of even a *son.* Nothing that would savor of apologizing for Absalom or of reflection upon the providences that caused his death could possibly find place in the inspired liturgies of the church.

PSALM VI.

This plaintive Psalm is ascribed to David, but its date and occasion are not entirely certain. It was obviously composed in some season of severe affliction, this affliction being not (as some have too hastily concluded) sickness, but the hostility of enemies. He does indeed speak of his bones as "vexed" (v. 2), but of his "soul" as yet more so (v. 3); and in the sequel alludes so decidedly to his personal enemies (vs. 7, 8, 10) as to leave no doubt that this trial was primarily from persecutors rather than from disease. Not unnaturally, his body sympathizes with his mental sufferings. Enemies outside of himself are certainly here; and this cause being sufficient to account for all the points made here, we need not look for any other. —— Under the inquiry, What enemy was this? the choice lies between Saul and Absalom, with some preponderance in favor of the latter, especially because, under this great trial, he might very naturally feel that the Lord was rebuking and chastising him "in hot displeasure," because of his great sins in the matter of Bathsheba. The words of vs. 8 and 10 are also quite appropriate to these enemies.——It is, however, a case in which we lack the data for an absolutely certain conclusion.

In the caption, "Neginoth," which appears in the caption of seven Psalms and also in Habakkuk 3, is supposed to name a stringed instrument, played by striking the strings, as the Hebrew word indicates.——"Sheminith," signifying an eighth or octave, is thought to mean an octave *below*, *i. e.*, on the bass key—probably as more appropriate to this sad theme.

1. O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I *am* weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

3. My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?

This is imploring supplication under a sense of guilt and ill desert. If we assume the scene to be his flight before Absalom, we very readily account for this pungent conviction of guilt and this sense of the divine displeasure. It need not surprise us that God should call to his mind those greatest sins of his public life adultery and murder, both committed under circumstances of extreme aggravation. We must suppose David to have seen and felt very deeply that God still had a controversy with him for those awful sins, and could not send him the deliverance he sought till his heart was broken again in most sincere repentance, and he should publicly cast himself upon divine mercy. Then God might, honorably to himself and safely as to David, forgive his sins and send him help from on high.——"My bones are

vexed," is, more precisely, are shaken, *tremble* under the weight of an old man's bitter grief and heart-trials.——"But thou, O Lord, how long" ere thou give me some token of thy forgiving mercy and send me the help I need?

4. Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

"Return" suggests that God's displeasure is expressed by *distance*—by withdrawing the light and joy of his presence. He rests his plea, not on his good deeds, not even on his repentance, but solely on God's mercy: "*for thy name's sake* save me." So all true penitents feel. No words can put too strongly their sense of emptiness as to all merit of their own.

5. For in death *there is* no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

"In death" means, not in the momentary point of dying, but in the state of the dead—equivalent to "in the grave" in the parallel clause. So, also, "remembrance of thee" corresponds in thought to "give thee thanks," and aids us to the precise significance of the verse. This does not deny all thought and consciousness, much less all existence in the state after death, but simply denies that the dead can render thanks to God here in his holy temple before the eyes of living men, as his soul longed to do. His prayer would be, Let me live; let me find mercy of thee, so that I may go again before the great congregation in thy house of praise and there render my thanksgivings for delivering mercy. Death would cut me off from this greatest joy of my heart.——The same sentiment appears again in Ps. 30: 9, and 88: 10–12, and 115: 17, 18; also Isa. 38: 18.

6. I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

7. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

Groans and tears are the witness of his bitter grief. So many sharp sorrows at once—his throne in peril; his son a rebel and the immediate cause of this avalanche of trouble; but, more than all, a sense that his own God was chastening him in his hot displeasure—how could any heart, accustomed to repose in God's love, pass through such complicated, multiplied, torturing pains without tears?

8. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

9. The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

All suddenly his waiting soul receives the witness from God of

his forgiving mercy, and instantly his tone changes; despondency gives place to exultant hope and even confidence in God. "Depart from me," says he, "all ye workers of iniquity;" what more have I to do with you? Is not my God almighty to save? He has heard the voice of my weeping: it is enough! And he turns the sweet thought over and over: "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping;" "the Lord hath heard my supplication;" the Lord not only hath in the nearer present, but will in the future receive my prayer. All will be well!

10. Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return *and* be ashamed suddenly.

In this connection these words are more prediction than imprecation. He felt sure of this result, and could expect nothing less. ——"Let them return," *i. e.*, from this persecuting pursuit of me; let them retire, baffled, defeated, broken; "let them be ashamed" —in the usual sense of confounded, put to shame, as men utterly unable to accomplish their purpose.

PSALM VII.

The caption to this Psalm fails to solve with certainty the question of its particular occasion, because we are unable to identify this "Cush, the Benjamite." The history gives no allusion to him under this name. Some suppose that he is Shimei, who came out from Bahurim and met David in his flight before Absalom (2 Sam. 16: 5–13) and cursed him grievously. Others suppose that he is King Saul himself, this name Cush, equivalent to the *Ethiopian*, being given to Saul to signify his bad character. There are slight traces (*e. g.*, in Amos 9: 7) that the Ethiopians were in bad repute, and hence the name might be given to Saul for this reason. In favor of the reference to Shimei are the prominence given to certain spoken words; and the fact that this caption seems to assume that the case was well known, coupled also with the circumstance that the preceding Psalms—the third and fourth certainly, the fifth with very great probability, and the sixth with a fair degree of probability—refer to the conspiracy of Absalom and to David's sore affliction from that cause. If this seventh Psalm refers to this same event, we have an obvious reason for the grouping of these Psalms together and for the absence of any more definite account in their respective captions of their circumstances and occasion.——In favor of the reference to Saul is mainly the one consideration that the points made seem to fit his case and his relations to David better than they fit the case of Absalom.——The considerations are, in my view, too evenly balanced to justify a very positive decision between them. Fortunately, no very important result turns upon the de-

cision. The moral of the Psalm is essentially the same, whichever may have been its special occasion.——"Shiggaion" is probably a Psalm of *wandering*, written during David's flight and wandering from his home and city, either before Saul or before Absalom.——The previous Psalm confesses great sin as toward God; this asserts integrity and uprightness as toward man, his enemy and persecutor, yet with no necessary antagonism or even diversity in the moral state of the writer, save that there he contemplates his relations toward God, here his relations toward man.

1. O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

2. Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending *it* in pieces, while *there is* none to deliver.

David rests his appeal to God for help on two grounds: (1.) that he is in peril and can not live without help: (2.) that he has made the Lord God his refuge; that he had long before accepted Jehovah as his Friend and Helper, and therefore comes to him now in his time of need.——That he should speak of his enemies at one time as many and at other times as one, need occasion no difficulty, since the one may be a chief—the leader of the rest. This would apply either to Saul or to Absalom, each of these being the moving spirit, but having others acting under them in their efforts against David's life.

3. O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;

4. If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy;)

5. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take *it;* yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honor in the dust. Selah.

If I have done aught against my enemy worthy of death, as he seems to claim, I refuse not to die. If I have forfeited my life by crime against my enemy, let him take it!——The last clause of v. 4, put in parenthesis in our English version, has been translated and constructed variously, the verb rendered "have delivered" being translated by Gesenius and Alexander, stripped or spoiled; by Fuerst, pressed sorely upon, afflicted; and by Maurer, have enraged. All concur in discarding the parenthesis and in putting *if* instead of "yea," continuing the same construction as in the three preceding verbs—"If I have done this; if I have rewarded evil; if I have spoiled," or as the sense may be, oppressed or enraged. Moreover all agree that the Hebrew words for "*without cause*" apply not to the enemy but to his own act, thus: If I have without good cause oppressed or spoiled; not, if I have oppressed one who had no cause to be my enemy.——The

Hebrew gives no authority for changing the construction from *if* to "yea." The more exact translation would be, "If I have requited evil for good to one who was my friend, if I have even spoiled him as an enemy without provocation, then let my enemy pursue my soul and overtake and tread down my life to the ground," etc.

6. Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me *to* the judgment *that* thou hast commanded.

"Arise and awake," addressed to God, are strong words, indicating that he had been sitting and even sleeping while his friend had been in sore peril from enraged enemies. It seemed to David that his imminent danger had been unnoticed by his God.——"Lift up thyself *in* this rage of mine enemies"—in the midst of it, while they are breathing out threatening and slaughter against me. "Because of" is rather implied than expressed.——While my enemies are excited to fury to do me a great injustice, do thou stir up thyself in earnest to do me justice. The word "anger" seems to be spoken of God to correspond antithetically with "rage," said of his enemies; but the real antithesis of thought is as given above—they, mad upon doing me injustice; thou, therefore, in solemn earnest to do me justice. Whenever the word "anger" is used of God it ought certainly to be qualified by his well known character, and therefore every element of unreasonable passion or irritation, or of selfish excitement, must be perfectly excluded. The character, the heart, of God being what it is, anger in him can not possibly be any thing more or else than a just and righteous displeasure against wrong-doing and an honorable and benevolent zeal to sustain the right and put down the wrong.——"Awake for me to the judgment thou hast commanded," might be put thus: Awake in my behalf to decide my case by a righteous decision according to that providential government over men which thou hast instituted. The words recognize the fact of God's righteous government over men as a positive institution, to which in this emergency he makes his confident appeal.

7. So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.

The nations shall gather about Thee as their great Judge; therefore return thou to thy lofty throne above this assembled people. The thought is of a grand court of the nations with the Great God as their judge.

8. The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity *that is* in me.

9. Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end;

but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

10. My defense *is* of God, which saveth the upright in heart.

The same idea is more fully expanded. Additional points are made—that God rules to put an end to wickedness and to establish righteousness; and rules with perfect equity because "he tries hearts and reins"—*i. e.*, judges, not according to outside appearances, but according to inward reality, the intents of the heart.

11. God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day.

12. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

In v. 11, the words "with the wicked" are not expressed in the original—omitted, we must presume, because in the writer's mind too obvious to need mention. God's judgment upon the case of the righteous is thought of here as a vindication of his cause against the oppression of the wicked. So considered, David says, "God will avenge the righteous man, intensely indignant all the time" *i. e.*, against his oppressor. So the next words imply, "If *he* turn not"—which can possibly mean none other than this wicked persecutor of the good. This turning must be a reversal of his course—real repentance of this sin. ——"Hath bent [Heb. *trodden*] his bow," *i. e.*, with the foot as was the practice in springing the powerful bow of the ancient warrior.

13. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.

The best critics concur in reading the last clause, not "against the persecutors," but he *prepares burning arrows.* The Hebrew words seem to demand this. Arrows on fire were hurled to burn down cities and do otherwise a terrible execution.

14. Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

15. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made.

16. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

The figure sets forth that this wicked man studiously plots mischief, involving slander and lies; digs a pit for the good man but falls into it himself, his schemes reacting against himself under the righteous ordering of divine retribution.

17. I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

In view of such results of God's righteous ways in providence, David exults in the Lord and sings praises to his glorious name. Well he may! So let all those who love his name and trust his righteous administration unite their hearts and songs in grateful praises.

PSALM VIII.

A recent critic advances the opinion that the idea of this Psalm was suggested to David by his victory over Goliath, thinking of himself as a mere child, and of his powerful antagonist as "the enemy and avenger," whose proud boasts he brought by God's power to eternal silence. This allusion to "the enemy and avenger" is the only point in the Psalm which favors this opinion. Every thing else concurs to sustain the more common view, viz., that the Psalm had no particular historical occasion, but stands as a sublime ode in praise of God's glory as revealed in all his works, including man, the chief of them all. Its key-note appears in the first strain which leads the thought of the ode, and in the last which comes in as the comprehensive inference from the whole; "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" How grand and glorious are thy manifestations in this world of thine!——I see no demand for any other *occasion* for this writing than the opening of one's eyes and heart to the impressions which a view of the heavens, the earth and man, would legitimately make. For such surveys of the heavens David's shepherd life gave him ample opportunity.——"Upon Gittith" probably refers either to the instrument or to the music with which it should be sung. It appears also in the titles to Ps. 81, and 84, which like this are joyous in character.

1. O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

That this "Lord" is *our* Lord exceedingly heightens the preciousness of these manifestations. "Thy *name* is equivalent to thy manifestations—the qualities of character which thou dost reveal over all the earth, in every work of thy hands."——The form of the Hebrew verb in the phrase, "who hast *set*," as it stands in our text, is precisely the Hebrew imperative. "*Set* thou thy glory above the heavens." Some critics, however, suppose it to be defectively written, and really to be the indicative, and therefore to be translated as in our English version. The current of thought strongly favors this view. On the other hand, an imperative here—a *command* going forth from the Psalmist, to be repeated by every reader and singer, is simply unendurable.

2. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou

ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

The words, "ordain strength out of the mouth of babes," etc., will impress most readers as not very clear. A careful study both of the original and of the nature of the case will give us some light. The Hebrew word for ordain * means primarily to found, to *lay the foundation for*.——"Strength" is the usual meaning of the Hebrew word thus translated, yet in this case most critics concur in the sense—*praise, glory*. We get the full idea when we contemplate this admiration of God's works, felt in the minds of children and expressed by their lips, as giving *strength* to the claims and the cause of the great God—affording one of the most convincing testimonies to his infinite perfections. Their simple unsophisticated hearts, as yet untainted with the false philosophies of older sinners, bear a glorious witness to the real grandeur, sublimity, wisdom and beneficence of God's great works of creation and providence.——It is better not to press the words, "babes and sucklings" too far back upon infancy. The nature of the case requires that we think of children who are sufficiently mature to take in the natural impression of the beauty and glory of God's great world. Our Lord seems to refer to this passage in that devout ejaculation (Matt. 11: 25): "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth" [this epithet manifestly referring to the strain of this Psalm] "because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and *hast revealed them unto babes*." Yet "babes" here are not mere infants in days (speechless infants) but rather simple-hearted children as opposed to the worldly-wise, the self-conceited and vain. Another allusion made by Christ to this passage (Matt. 21: 16) most certainly contemplates children old enough to go into the streets and the temple and shout "Hosanna to the Son of David." As to this quotation of the verse before us, it need not be pressed to imply that David in this Psalm explicitly predicted these joyful acclamations of the children. It suffices if these acclamations afford a *case in point*—an illustration of the great principle contemplated in the Psalm. So much is entirely and beautifully true. The simple heart of childhood loves to bear witness to the purity and glory of Jesus as it appeared when he entered Jerusalem in triumph. The same simple heart loves to bear like witness when it sees God in his great works in this beautiful and glorious world—which is the doctrine of our Psalm. ——Such testimony serves to silence the cavils of God's enemies. The words quietly suggest that it is only from enemies to God—from those who are his enemies in their heart by reason of their wicked works—that any counter voice is heard, disparaging to the great God. No other voice ever needs to be put to silence save that of prejudiced enemies.

3. When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

4. What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

The omission to name the glorious sun, as well as the prominence given to the moon and the stars, suggest that this is a night scene. Yet David had a soul to appreciate the glories of the sun, for no human pen ever spake of the sun in finer, grander strains than his in Psalm 19. But the nightly heavens are sublimely grand. Let one walk abroad of a brilliant night and open his mind to the full impression; let him think of those resplendent orbs of the heavens, their number, their vastness, their beauty; then, if he can enlarge his conceptions by the aid of modern astronomy, its instruments of observation and its mathematical estimates of size, motions, and distance, how will his view of man be dwarfed almost to nothing in the comparison! Verily he can find no more fit utterance than this, "Lord, what is man," thrown into the scale against these sublimely glorious heavens? The great God whose hand built all those worlds, and who has the care of them all upon his heart—how can he stoop to be mindful also of frail and insignificant man? How can he have the love requisite to "*visit*" him in thoughtful care and tender compassion? Yet this Great Father has made account most wonderfully of this little being, man—as the next verse proceeds to say.

5. For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor.

The word translated "angels" is *Elohim*, the usual sense of which is God—the Mighty One. The translators seem to have followed the Septuagint in giving it "angels." But the Seventy were governed, not by the usage and authority of the word, but by their ideas of the doctrinal exigencies of the passage. It is better to follow the authority of the word and accept the sense—a little below divinity, according to Gen. 1: 27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." That David had the words of Moses in his mind is made the more certain by his obvious allusion to man's control over all the lower animals as said by Moses (Gen. 1: 28).——The word "for" in this verse fails to give the true relations of the thought. Better thus: "What is man that thou shouldest remember him, the son of man thou shouldest visit him, and *even* make him a little below the divinity, and crown him with glory and honor"—*i. e.*, make him king over all other living creatures?

6. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou has put all *things* under his feet:

7. All sheep and oxen yea, and the beasts of the field;

8. The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, *and whatsoever* passeth through the paths of the seas.

On verse 6, the question might arise whether "the works of thy hands" contemplate inanimate matter, or refer exclusively to animated, living creatures, as expanded into particulars below. The words themselves would readily admit the broadest application, but the context and the obvious reference to Gen. 1: 26, 28, favor the restriction to man's dominion over the animal creation. Dr. Alexander correctly says: "The dominion thus ascribed to man as a part of his original prerogative is not to be confounded with the coercive rule which he still exercises over the inferior creation." That is, David with his eye on Gen. 1: 26, 28, thinks only of the dignity and dominion accorded to man in his primeval innocence, not of the power he is able by superior skill to assert and maintain over a portion of the lower animals, despite of his fallen moral state. Hence we have no occasion to debate the question whether in his present state man has or has not this supreme dominion over the animal creation.——Notice should be taken of the argument in Heb. 2: 5–9, where this Psalm is cited as guarantying to man, as a race, supreme dominion—"all things put under his feet;" and the argument is made that this has no complete fulfillment otherwise than in and through Christ, and therefore has its proper fulfillment in him alone. In other words, this supreme dominion, pledged to man in innocence, was lost in his fall and regained only through Christ and in his person. Under this construction of the Psalm we have a far more grand idea in the central question—"What is man that thou art mindful of him, that thou shouldest visit him?"—thus: When I contemplate the glorious heavens as they spread out their majesty before me in the night season, I say, what is frail, weak man that thou shouldest be so lovingly mindful of him and shouldest visit him in the person of thine only Son, and shouldest make him only less than God, lifting him into wonderful alliance with the Highest through the incarnation of thy Son in human flesh, and then shouldest crown him with glory and supreme dominion by making Jesus, the great divine Man, absolutely *Lord of all?* This seems to be the argument in Heb. 2: 5–9, and beyond question intensifies the force and sublimity of this Psalm. What would be grand with no underlying thought of Jesus as being *in* the race by his human birth becomes surpassingly majestic when we include this great mystery of godliness and find the supreme dominion of man over God's creation consummated in the Son of Mary—the loving condescension of the Great Father made ineffably glorious in the lifting up of our race morally into the divine image.

9. O LORD our Lord, how excellent *is* thy name in all the earth!

The points made in detail between the first verse and the last serve to put new beauty and force into these words, and we gladly re-

peat them in the closing strain, for more fit words no human mind has conceived or pen recorded. And if we may include in the scope of this Psalm, not the material world only but the moral also—not only man as a race with no Christ in it, but the race with an incarnate Savior as part and even the chief part of it, how will the manifestations of God in all the earth—in all its moral history, in all the destiny of its once living men, saints and sinners, become the admiration, the wonder, the praise of the intelligent universe forever!

PSALM IX.

Various opinions have been held respecting the particular circumstances under which this Psalm was written. It has been put forward as far as the time of Hezekiah, but without necessity and in causeless disregard of the authority of the title, which ascribes it to David. If we suppose it was written by David after some considerable victories had been gained over the national enemies of Israel—*e. g.*, the Amalekites, the Philistines—while other enemies still remained in formidable power, we shall have present all the circumstances which the allusions in this song demand.——The strain of this Psalm is exulting praise to God for victories already achieved; the repeated and joyful recognition of these victories as the result of God's righteous judgments from his lofty throne as King of nations, coupled with the assurance that God will still defend his people and vindicate their cause against their wicked foes.

As to the significance of the words in the caption, "Upon Muthlabben," the choice lies between these constructions: (1) That of Alexander, who takes them to be the first words of some well-known song, which are given here to indicate the tune in which this Psalm is to be sung, as we might say, To be sung in "Rock of Ages" or "Majestic sweetness," meaning the well-known tune associated with these words; or (2) that of Gesenius, "with female voices;" or (3) that of Fuerst, "as the name of a musical choir." The darkness that rests upon this and similar phrases in the captions of these Psalms goes to prove their high antiquity, running back beyond all reliable traditionary knowledge. Things perfectly well understood then have passed into the darkness of forgotten ages. It is, however, nearly if not quite certain that most of these terms referred to the musical execution of the Psalm. Since almost every thing relating to Hebrew music, its methods, its art, and its instruments, has perished, these musical terms are at best practically dead.

1. I will praise *thee*, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will show forth all thy marvelous works.

2. I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou Most High.

The Psalmist breaks into his song of praise with overflowing soul: "I will praise Jehovah with all my heart." The theme is vast and glorious; "let me proclaim all thy marvelous works." ——The Hebrew text omits "*thee*" in the first clause with no loss of terseness and force: "I will praise Jehovah with all my heart." Then we have the very common change to the direct address—"all *thy* wonderful works." The sequel shows that his thought is chiefly upon those great victories which the God of Israel had given them over their national enemies.——Note that these victories are ascribed specially to his divine arm; hence, "I will be glad and rejoice in *thee*, thou Most High and Mighty One!"

3. When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.

4. For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

That his enemies fall and perish *in God's presence* shows that their being turned back in defeat and flight is attributed to God's arm. He *was there*. They fell before his face. And this fall of theirs came of the fact that the Lord appeared in power to vindicate the cause of his anointed king, his servant David. In righteousness to Abraham and his posterity, God had given them Canaan; in outrage against righteousness, the Amalekites came down upon the feeble and helpless who had fallen into the rear of their marching hosts (Deut. 25: 17–19); in outrage against righteousness these hostile nations had often fallen upon them for pillage and slaughter. Hence it was demanded of the righteous God that he should reveal himself from his throne of judgment, doing right.

5. Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name forever and ever.

6. O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.

This is a rebuke, not of words but of deeds—rebuke in the sense of discomfiture, overthrow, and putting to utter confusion. They are thought of, it should be noted, as "wicked," hostile to God, and hostile to the true interests of humanity. Hence their utter destruction. In the strong figure of the orignal, "thou hast *wiped out* their name forever and ever."——In v. 6, the form of direct address to the "enemy" tends to mislead the reader, since it is not he, the enemy, but God, who is addressed as having destroyed their cities. Therefore better thus: "As to the enemy, the destructions brought upon him are final, total; thou, Lord, hast destroyed

even their walled and powerful cities; their very name and memorial have perished, even theirs."——Amalek may be taken as a case for illustration—perhaps was in the writer's mind. Hear Moses (Deut. 25: 17–19): "Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and *he feared not God.* Therefore it shall be, when the Lord hath given thee rest in the land, that thou shalt blot out" ["*wipe out,*" as here, v. 5] "the remembrance" [here the same Hebrew word is rendered "memorial"] "of Amalek from under heaven." This commission was specially intrusted to Saul (1 Sam. 15: 2, 3), and was thoroughly performed by David (1 Sam. 27: 8, 9, and 30: 1, 17, and 2 Sam. 8: 12). This case illustrates the animus of that great divine commission as it appears in this Psalm and in the history of the sin and doom of Amalek and other hostile nations of kindred spirit. Other nations are manifestly in the thought of the Psalm; but the case of Amalek shows why God doomed them, why he bade his people destroy them, and why David magnifies the righteous justice of the great God in their destruction.

7. But the LORD shall endure forever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.

8. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

The Hebrew for "endure" is not limited to the idea of existing, prolonging his days; much less to that of resisting decay and holding out in vigor, as the English reader might perhaps suppose; but it has simply the sense of sitting as king on his throne, as the parallel clause has it, "He has prepared his throne for" [the administration of] "justice; and he shall judge the inhabited world—the world considered as peopled—and, therefore, with a moral administration over moral agents, and not merely a physical agency over material things. Let men rejoice in this *moral administration,* and welcome the fact that it shall be perpetual, eternal.

9. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.

10. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

The connection of thought with the previous verse demands rather "*consequently*" than "also"—an inference, and not merely an additional fact. It is *because* God rules the nations and the people of the earth in righteousness that he will surely prove himself a refuge for the oppressed. For it is mainly to vin-

dicate the cause of the oppressed that God rules the nations at all, his purpose being to restrain sin and crime and to break in pieces the oppressor. They who know God's name in the sense of knowing these grand elements of his glorious character as a righteous ruler of wicked men and wicked devils will surely put their trust in him, for all the history of time shows that God has never forsaken those who have sought his aid against wrong-doers.

11. Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.

On the basis of such views of God's ways in justice toward his people and their oppressors, rests this new summons to praise and to a fresh testimony to the perfect doings of the Great King and Lord of all.

12. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

The English version does not give clearly the sense of the word "them"—"he remembereth *them*." The real antecedent is "blood," which in Hebrew is plural—bloods. When God searches for the blood-stains of murder, he remembers *them*—those blood-stains—put here for the crime and its author. The writer alludes to Gen. 9: 5, 6, the same leading words being here as there. Making "inquisition for blood" is there "requiring" the murderer's blood *for* the blood he has shed.——By "the humble" is meant the *defenseless*, upon whom the strong come down with cruel, bloody hands. Their cry God accounts it at once his duty and his glory to hear and avenge.

13. Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble *which I suffer* of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

14. That I may show forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

Primarily we may consider this as David's personal case, pertinent however in its application to every other servant of God in like circumstances. Remarkably one chief reason for his plea for deliverance is, that he may live to render praise to God in the gates—the most public resort of the great city of Israel—*the* place of all others for bearing testimony to God's wonders of mercy before the great national congregation.

15. The heathen are sunk down in the pit *that* they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

As usual, God makes man's wrath react to his own praise. Foiling the wicked in their plans, he turns back their wicked endeavors upon their own head. The figure is taken from the pits dug to catch wild animals. The wicked dig such pits to ensnare

and destroy the righteous: God brings their own feet into these snares. Haman and his gallows are in point.

16. The LORD is known *by* the judgment *which* he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.

Literally this would read: "Jehovah is known: he hath executed judgment;" but this can have no other sense than that of our English version: He is known *because* he has administered justice; known *by* those very acts of his righteous government. They reveal his real character. His creatures learn him from his doings and pre-eminently from those of his moral administration over intelligent beings. Of all his doings, this one is singled out as a rich case in point, viz.: that he causes the wicked to be taken in their own snares, drawn in and cast down into the pit of their own making. These overruling agencies of God evince his far-reaching eye and his all-controlling hand. He knows so well how to counterwork the most crafty schemes of the wicked and take them in their own snares and he never lacks the requisite agencies to bring about this result.——"Higgaion"—let the voice fall to a low key, and let the people muse quietly, solemnly, upon these sublime and momentous themes. It is generally conceded that "Higgaion" is a term of musical direction, indicating as above a low, half-suppressed tone, suggestive of serious meditation.——"Selah" calls for a pause for this purpose.

17. The wicked shall be turned into hell, *and* all the nations that forget God.

Guided by the entire context, following the course of thought throughout this Psalm, we must think of the "wicked" here as those wicked nations who appear as "mine enemies" (v. 3); as "the heathen" and "the wicked" (v. 5); as the "inhabited world" and the people thereof (v. 8); whose oppressions are implied (v. 9); whose murderous deeds are searched out and punished (v. 12); who are heathen, falling into their own pit (v. 15); judged before the very eyes of God (v. 19); impressed with fear and made to know that they are only frail men (v. 20). Consequently the punishment primarily meant by their being "turned into hell" is the utter destruction which befalls them *as nations* in this world. *As nations* they are not known in the world to come. Their nationality terminates with this earthly life and can not reappear in the next world. But let no one jump from this fact to the false assumption that this and kindred passages have no bearing upon a future hell for all the unrepenting wicked. The simple truth is that God's government *here* is a foreshadowing of his government *there*. His justice here is a sure pledge of his justice there, for his character changes not. Retribution here, carrying with it the utter ruin of his persistent enemies, ensures like retribution there. Retribution here is of

necessity imperfect, incomplete; hence the demand for a supplementary retribution in the next world to fill out the imperfections of this, applying to *all the individuals* who experienced retribution in their national character and relations in this earthly life, and indeed to all the race. Therefore every case of retribution upon a guilty nation in this world is a pledge, fresh from the hand of God himself, that he will reward the incorrigibly wicked in the world to come according to their deeds. If in the great slaveholders' rebellion, fresh in every mind, "God prepared his throne for judgment;" if he heard the cry of the oppressed; if he made inquisition for blood; if he caused those uprising rebels to sink down in the pit themselves had dug, and snared them in the work of their own hands: then let it be forever known and never questioned—*the same God of justice will set up his "great white throne"* for *a future final judgment;* will bring into that judgment every work of man, good or evil," and make his final award in perfect equity "according to their works."——If Napoleon with guilty ambition and execrable folly hurls France on Prussia in the dreadful conflict of arms and finds his foot caught in his own net; himself and his dynasty and his nation sunk together into the pit themselves had sought to dig for a brother nation: then "God will be known by the judgment which he executeth," and will manifest his justice and his terrible but righteous retribution in the next world as well as this, making the retribution which passes so manifestly before our eyes here the pledge, and so far as the nature of the case admits, the illustration of that far more appalling, more searching, more eventful—that perfect, that eternal retribution which constitutes the one great fact of the world to come!——"All the nations that forget God"—forget God and therefore live as if there were no God—forget God, and therefore have no faith in a just retribution for sin and no fear of it; forget God, and therefore spurn his law and trample down the rights of our common humanity: all such must have their doom, first as nations in the retributions of time; then as individuals in the more just—the perfectly just and complete retributions of eternity!

18. For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall *not* perish forever.

The "needy" are those especially who need God's protection against the oppressions of men both wicked and strong. They are thought of as defenseless save as God becomes their Defender. He never fails to assume the care and defend the cause of those who, having no other refuge, cast themselves on him.

19. Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

20. Put them in fear, O LORD: *that* the nations may know themselves *to be but* men. Selah.

"Let not man prevail," in the sense of being even for the

moment, stronger than God, or even of *appearing* to be so. Impress the nations with a wholesome fear of the Great God and let them know that frail man against Almighty God is infinitely puny and powerless.

PSALM X.

By general consent of critics this Psalm bears a close relation to the ninth. The Septuagint and Vulgate unite them into one, led to do so probably, not only by a general similarity of theme, but by the fact that this has no distinct caption. Whenever the second of two consecutive Psalms has no caption, it is presumed to be by the same author, and ordinarily on a related theme, and consequently of the same date, constituting with the former a *pair* of Psalms. We shall see several cases verifying this principle. ——The writer expatiates upon the wickedness of the ungodly man, his antagonism against the righteous, his oppression of the weak, and his bold impiety toward God. He seems to conceive of an ideal wicked man rather than of any definite individual. Whereas the preceding Psalm contemplates nations as such arrayed against God's people, this treats of the wicked man with more definite reference to his personal and heart relations to sin, to God, and to God's suffering people.

1. Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? *why* hidest thou *thyself* in times of trouble?

This is said *as if* the Lord seemed to stand aloof and let the wicked have his own way in persecuting God's weak and afflicted people. Such is often the first and outside appearance of things in our world, due to the fact that probation preponderates over retribution and becomes the common law of the divine administration for the present state of our existence. While God waits on guilty men to give them space for repentance, they seize their opportunity as space for bold impiety and outrageous wickedness.

2. The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

The better construction of the first clause is this: "Under the pride of the wicked, the afflicted man burns, *i. e.*, his heart burns with trial, grief, perplexity—and perhaps the implication is with a feeling like that expressed in v. 1. The verb is future—*will* burn, *i. e*, may be expected to do so; will scarcely fail to feel this sore and burning trial.——The last clause is either a future or an imperative: The wicked *will be* taken in the crafty devices which he has conceived; or, *let* him be, etc. In the latter case it would be the afflicted man's prayer. The sentiment—the wicked man falling into his own net—appears repeatedly in the previous Psalm.

3. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.

The last clause of this verse has been construed with great diversity; thus: Acquiring unrighteous gain, he blesses those whom God abhors; or blesses himself but contemns God; or blesses the covetous whom the Lord abhors; or blesses but still contemns God; or finally and preferably on the whole to either of the preceding, acquiring unrighteous gain, he parts company with and contemns God. The usual word for "bless," * from being used as a verb of farewell parting, is thought to shade off into the sense of parting from, terminating all social connection with. The wicked man, prospering in his covetous schemes for unrighteous gain, abandons God, no longer feels a sense of dependence upon him, and even despises, contemns him. This is one of the fearful facts of human experience.——The first clause is: The wicked gloats over the desire of his soul—makes a vain display of it.

4. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek *after God:* God *is* not in all his thoughts.

The reader will notice that there are no Hebrew words corresponding to "*after God.*" It therefore becomes a question whether the sense be as in our English version; or thus: The wicked man, according to the pride of his countenance, says, God will not *require*—will not make inquisition for human guilt. I incline to the latter construction both because this verb appears prominently in the previous Psalm (*e. g.*, v. 12), and because it is fully in the spirit of the immediate context here; (*e. g.*, "Thy judgments are far above out of his sight.")——The first clause is expressive: "The wicked man, according to the loftiness of his look" (literally of his *nose*). Like this lofty, proud look of his, so is his heart.——All his thought is—*no God.* He is practically an atheist. He thinks and lives as if there were no God. God has no place in his thought.

5. His ways are always grievous; thy judgments *are* far above out of his sight: *as for* all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

6. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for *I shall* never *be* in adversity.

"Grievous," applied to his ways, is not so much in harmony with the course of thought as the sense *strong, prosperous,*—meaning either that he is strong and bold of heart, recklessly defying God; or that his ways prosper for the time, and therefore he goes on with no misgivings, no compunctions, nothing to arrest or seriously trouble him in his career of crime. God's judgments are far up out of his sight, as if concealed away in the distance of the heavenly throne, and not brought down palpably within his

view where he can not but feel their presence and know their reality. Of course he blows at his enemies contemptuously, and fears nothing in the future. This is put with great force: "I am not the man who shall ever be in calamity. The righteous have calamity enough for their portion; but I am safe!"

7. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue *is* mischief and vanity.

A more specific description of the wicked man, and first, of his words; sins of the tongue. "His mouth is full of cursing"—probably false swearing; and of deceit—for the same purpose; and oppression, extortion. "Under his tongue," as if coiled away there, like the poison of the serpent, are mischief and sin, this last word signifying what is void of all good—pure wickedness.

8. He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.

9. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

Here are his deeds, presented under the figure of one lying in wait secretly—a lion watching for his prey, a hunter laying his snares.

10. He croucheth, *and* humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

The Hebrew verbs would be rendered much more in accordance with their usual sense if referred to the suffering victim, rather than to his oppressors, thus: "And crushed, he sinks down, yea, he falls—the afflicted do—under his strong ones;" the last words referring either to his powerful means of attack or to his strong helpers.

11. He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see *it*.

The heart and thought of the wicked oppressor are put here in plain words: "God (he thinks) has forgotten all his promises of help to his afflicted people—all his responsibilities as moral governor of the world; he has covered his own face so as to notice nothing; he will never see these deeds of mine."——Ah! how strangely does he delude himself! But such are the ways of sin and of Satan!

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.

The Psalmist can no longer restrain himself, but cries out: "Arise, O God, for it is time for thee to manifest thy presence

and show thy hand! Let it not be said, God has forgotten his helpless and suffering ones!"

13. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require *it.*

"Wherefore do the wicked contemn God?" which may mean not merely, Why is he so infatuated as to do it? but, Why does God so far withdraw himself from human affairs as to suffer it? The former, however, is more in harmony with the context, the mind of the Psalmist being upon the inexpressible folly and falsehood of his saying in his heart, Thou wilt not *require, i. e.*, make inquisition into human guilt—call the sinner to account; the same words which we have met repeatedly in this sense, *e. g.*, 9: 12 and 10: 4. This contemning God is the same spirit seen in v. 3 above where the same verb appears, unfortunately translated "*abhorreth,*" and referred to God rather than the sinner. Without doubt, the sense both there and here alike, is that the wicked contemns God, despises him as one whose word of threatening against sin and sinners is not to be feared.——It is specially insulting that the sinner should address this to God: "Thou wilt not require!"

14. Thou hast seen *it;* for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite *it* with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

The sinner is utterly mistaken, "for thou *hast seen*"—for thou wilt always (future tense) look upon sorrow and grief [such as the sin of the wicked occasions] to give [the due reward] with thy hands. The helpless casts himself upon thee and leaves himself in thy hands—both ideas being virtually involved in this Hebrew clause.——As to the orphan, thou hast [ever] been his helper. ——Thus the entire history of God's faithful care of his trustful people confronts the impious assumption of the wicked and shows that God will surely protect his suffering friends and requite their oppressors.

15. Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil *man* seek out his wickedness *till* thou find none.

"Break" [shiver to atoms] "the arm of the wicked;" let him not defiantly exult in his vain strength against God! "Seek out his wickedness—*make inquisition* for his sins"—the same word as repeatedly above. Search it all out thoroughly till no more remains to be found.

16. The LORD *is* King forever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.

Jehovah is King, moral governor, taking cognizance therefore vigilantly of all transgression, and with no intermission or end—forever and ever. This allusion to the heathen, the nations hostile

to his people, carries us back to the scope of the previous Psalm, and serves to show the close relation between this and that.

17. LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:

18. To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

To *hear* the longing desire is to hear and also to answer. And not only hast thou always done this in all thy past administration, but thou *wilt make their heart firm* [more precisely the sense than "prepare"]—thou wilt give them an assured and solid confidence. So surely wilt thou hear their cry for help, and so righteously wilt thou judge the orphan and the oppressed [literally the crushed ones], that the man of the earth will add no more to affright—will no more terrify or even alarm.——"The man of the earth" is a phrase of rare occurrence, but probably is used as we say: "the man of the world," but with national allusion to the people outside of Palestine—the recognized enemies of God's children. Some critics, however, connect this clause with the verb here rendered "oppress," in this sense—so that frail man shall no more drive them out of the land.

PSALM XI.

This Psalm, ascribed to David, manifestly alludes to circumstances personal to him. It is easy to find in the history of his persecutions from both Saul and Absalom circumstances to which these words might allude, but the correspondence between the facts of the history and the words of this song is so general that we can not confidently fix upon any precise point of time as its date or upon any particular event as its special occasion. The main thought is clear: "I have made the Lord my trust; therefore I need not flee as if I had no refuge save in flight. The wicked may waylay me for my life: God shields the righteous, but sends awful judgments on the wicked: let this suffice me."

1. In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee *as* a bird to your mountain?

"Say ye *to my soul*"—in a way to touch my sensibilities most acutely. I beg you (David would say) not to distress my soul with such counsels. Rather say words that will put vigor into my faith in God; courage and calmness into my heart.——During the period of Saul's malign persecution, David did flee more than once to the mountain fastnesses of Judah. Probably at a later period, and perhaps in the early stages of Absalom's revolt,

his friends may have counseled his flight to the same mountains and may have drawn from him this first reply.

2. For, lo, the wicked bend *their* bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily shoot at the upright in heart.

Obviously, these also are the words of those who advised David to flee, assigning their reasons: For, lo, see, the wicked will tread their bow; they have fitted their arrow upon the string that they may shoot in the dark at the truly upright. They work so artfully in secret and have their schemes so well laid and so near their execution that you can not hope for safety otherwise than in flight.

3. If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

Translating this verse with due regard to the Hebrew tenses and connecting words, we must read it: "For the foundations will be torn up; what have the righteous achieved?" That is, despite the influence of good men, the very foundations of society are uptorn. The last clause is not, What *can*, nor what *will* they do? but what *have they done?* Very probably, however, this is implied: If they have been able to accomplish so little heretofore, when society still had some bottom, what will they be able to do after the bottom has fallen out and the foundations have been utterly torn up?——This also we may regard as part of the argument of David's friends, urging him to flight. This may have been the state of society at the breaking out of Absalom's rebellion.

4. The LORD *is* in his holy temple, the LORD'S throne *is* in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

5. The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

Here David answers. We are not, he would say, to reason on this case as if there were no God, or as if he had abandoned his throne in despair of maintaining moral order. Not at all. "The Lord is in his holy temple"—still abiding in the midst of his covenant people; still true to his responsibilities to punish the wicked and avenge the righteous.——The Lord is not only here in his earthly temple, but he has a higher throne in the heavens. From that lofty point of vision his eyes behold all the sons of men and try their deeds, weighing them, so to speak, in the scales of infinite justice. He also tries the righteous, with the result, however, of approbation—in strong contrast with the hatred he feels toward the wicked and every lover of forceful oppression.

6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and a horrible tempest: *this shall be* the portion of their cup.

Having judged and condemned the wicked, he will also punish—of which punishment this verse speaks, and in words and figures fearfully appalling. Upon them God will rain [pour forth abundantly] lightnings [not "snares"], fire and brimstone, and the hot, scorching wind, *i. e.*, the terrible sirocco of the desert; these are the portion of their cup—their assigned and righteous destiny.——The latest lexicographers give the word rendered "snares" the sense, *lightnings*—altogether more pertinent in this connection. The Hebrew word for "horrible tempest" means precisely a burning wind, scorching blasts—with unquestionable reference to the well-known and most terrible sirocco. The case of the fires sent upon Sodom and Gomorrah is in the writer's mind, and he would say—God will make wicked men a second Sodom and pour forth upon them another deluge of fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven! Figures of speech these are, indeed, but figures of most fearful import!——Their application to the wicked in the future world is not in the least softened and toned down by saying that these are only the judgments which God sends on wicked nations and cruel oppressors in the present world. For if, despite of the necessary imperfections and the manifold limitations of judgment upon men in this world, such figures come from the lips of God to express it, what will be the unmitigated, the perfect retribution of the eternal world? What figures will ever be found adequate to measure that shoreless ocean of the sinner's woe?

7. For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

The logic of this verse in its connection should not be overlooked. "*For*," the reason why God has destined such awful judgments for the wicked, is that, being righteous, he loves righteousness, and therefore can not endure wickedness—can not let it pass unpunished—can not give it unrestrained range in his moral universe.——His face looks [kindly] upon the upright.——Grammarians notice that both the word for face ["countenance"] and the suffix corresponding to "his" are not singular but plural. The best explanation of this apparent anomaly is the same which we must give for the plural names of the Deity, *e. g.*, Elohim. This only carries out the same idea—"*their faces.*"

PSALM XII.

"Upon Sheminith" occurs in the caption of Ps. 6—in the supposed sense there as here of an octave below—a grave and probably sorrowful tone.——This Psalm makes no allusion to any special historical occasion. Wickedness abounds, especially falsehood and deception, and men are defiant toward God's authority

and oppressive toward the defenseless. God will arise to their rescue and defense.

1. Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

Good, trustworthy men have almost disappeared from society. Amid the abounding wickedness of the times, David implores salvation from God.

2. They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: *with* flattering lips *and* with a double heart do they speak.

3. The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, *and* the tongue that speaketh proud things:

4. Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips *are* our own: who *is* lord over us.

"Vanity" is falsehood; words good for nothing because not true.——A "double heart" in the strong idiom of the Hebrew is "a heart and a heart"—one to hide and live by; another to show to the world and *not* to live by. But the Lord can not be deceived by such men. He utterly abhors their double heart and will cut them off for their sins. Expressively said, he will cut off those treacherous lips—that proud, lying tongue!——Their spirit is further described as virtually saying, "With our tongue we are mighty;" like heroes we say what we please: "our lips are with us," under our own exclusive control and we are responsible to nobody; "who is Lord to us?" Who shall dare dictate to us how we shall speak and what we may be allowed to say?—— Wonderfully true to proud human nature!

5. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set *him* in safety *from him that* puffeth at him.

It is assumed that these poor and needy ones are sufferers under the falsehood, treachery and oppression, of the ungodly. Therefore for their sake God will arise to their rescue.——The last clause of v. 5 will bear this construction: "I will put in safety him who pants for it;" *i. e.*, him whose uplifted cry for help comes up to my throne.

6. The words of the LORD *are* pure words: *as* silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

7. Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.

The words of the Lord are put in contrast with the words of the wicked—pure while those are foul; true and perfectly reliable, while those are utterly treacherous. The inference just here is that when God promises to help his people or to cut off their

oppressors, you need not fear that his words will fail. Therefore he will surely preserve his saints from all evil-doers forever.

8. The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

The wicked walk to and fro, ranging at their will with lofty bearing, according as the vilest men are in power—more or less according to the high position and influence of bad men. This construction—that of our English version—expresses an unquestionable truth and one not foreign to the scope of this Psalm, nor to the usual sense of these Hebrew words. Yet the last clause has been construed with very great diversity—by Gesenius and Maurer, "Like the rising of a tempest upon the sons of men;" by Robinson and Fuerst, "When badness, vileness is set on high;" while Alexander favors this: "Like exaltation is disgrace to the sons of men," *i. e.*, the disgrace cast on the righteous is really to their honor because it proves them to be not with the wicked in heart, but with God."

PSALM XIII.

The tone of this Psalm is earnest expostulation, as if God had utterly forgotten his suffering friend. Ultimately he expresses his confidence in God, and rises to exultant joy and songs of praise. ——David probably passed through experiences of this sort more than once. They are not unusual in the life-history of God's people. It is well therefore that such a Psalm should have a place in the devotional songs of Zion, evermore impressing the precious truth that God's trustful children will surely come forth from every affliction, however sore, with a song of praise; that God will not forget them forever; that, having put their faith to stern trial, he will make this very trial yield the fruit of a purer and stronger faith, a richer joy in God, and a firmer footing upon his promises.

1. How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2. How long shall I take counsel in my soul, *having* sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

The special form of this trial seems to have been oppression from some personal enemy, with very probable reference to Saul. His "taking counsel with a sad heart daily," refers to plans of action looking toward escape, relief, or the conciliation of his enemy, such (*e. g.*) as David often had with Jonathan. Repeated failure extorted the cry, "How long, Lord, wilt thou forget me and cast me off?" It seemed to him it would be forever!

3. Consider *and* hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the *sleep of* death;

4. Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; *and* those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

"Consider" means *look kindly* upon me. Let light break in upon my darkness and gladden my dimmed eyes, lest I sleep the death—with possible allusion to the usual dimness of vision in old age or from approaching death.——"When I am moved"—dislodged from my strong position; thrown into fresh trouble and solicitude.

5. But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

6. I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

A sudden change comes over his spirit and finds expression here. I have trusted and will still trust in God's mercy. "My very heart" (stronger than if he had said only I) I with all my heart will rejoice in thy salvation.——In the phrase "Dealt bountifully with me," the original words suggest the thought of blessings conferred *upon* me abundantly.

PSALM XIV.

This Psalm bears a very close resemblance to Ps. 53. Both are ascribed to David. The principal variations occur between Ps. 14: 5, 6, and Ps. 53: 5. In general the variations between these two Psalms fall under these two heads: (*a.*) The names of the Deity. In four instances the name "Lord" [Hebrew, Jehovah] in Ps. 14 becomes "God" [Elohim] in Ps. 53. Jehovah is not used at all in the latter Psalm. (*b.*) A weaker expression in Ps. 14 gives place to a stronger one in Ps. 53.——These comparative points make it probable if not certain that David wrote Ps. 14 first in time, and subsequently revised it with a few alterations as we have them in Ps. 53. The former, it will be noticed, appears in the first of the five books; the latter in the second, the compilation of which obviously bears date many years later.——The general theme is the deep depravity, the moral corruption of the race. They recognize no God; they seek him not; call not on his name; do abominable deeds; absolutely none are doers of good: they persecute and devour God's people and despise them for their trust in God—which points naturally elicit the prayer that God would save his people out of Zion.——Whether the "Nabal" of 1 Sam. 25 sat for the picture of this *nabal* ["the fool"], it may not be possible to determine with certainty. I see no objection to the supposition that his case suggested this Psalm, and yet we know too little of

him to affirm it as unquestionable. The Nabal of Mt. Carmel was thoroughly selfish and wicked, far enough from having any sympathy with David in his great trial as a persecuted man of God. Not unnaturally, therefore, David might make him the text for this brief presentation of the great points of the wicked man's character.

1. The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good.

Some have supposed the precise meaning of the first clause to be—would there were no God!—a mere wish in the fool's heart that there were none. This may be true of the wicked fool, but it can not be the precise and whole truth expressed here. It might be said doubtless that "the wish is father to this thought," but the child and not the father is the thing spoken of here. This product of wicked, selfish desire is atheism, not in theory but in thought and in act. His thinking presupposes no God; his acts are as if there were none.——The writer's usage of the phrase, "Say in one's heart," may be seen sufficiently in Ps. 10: 6, 11, 13, where this same atheistic and wicked man is the subject, one who "will not seek after God;" "God is not in all his thoughts." "He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved;" "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten;" "He hath said in his heart, thou wilt not require," *i. e.*, make inquisition for sin. In the same sense here, he says in his heart, No God! He repels all thought of God; he lays his schemes for wickedness as if there were no God; hardens himself in sin as if nothing were to be feared from God. He says this *in his heart*, not perhaps openly, not to the public ear. But it is the inner thought of the man, and it gives shape to his actual life. Practically, he is godless.——The consequences of this practical atheism the Psalmist proceeds to unfold. The first verb, translated "are corrupt," is equivalent to our English word *destroy*, and may well be taken to mean, They have wrought destruction, they have made their moral nature a ruin.——The next clause might be rendered, They have made their deeds abominable, or They have done abominable wickedness—the noun that follows the verb having either the usual sense of deed, a thing done, or the unusual sense of wickedness, like the parallel word in Ps. 53. The general sense is essentially the same either way.——"There is no doer of good," affirms the universal fact of depravity.——These, it should be remembered, are the fruits of practical atheism. The sense of a great and holy God very near, evermore noting all human thought and act, ever impressing human souls with his purity and his love, is a power perpetually restraining from sin, evermore transforming men to like purity and love. But when human depravity rules all such thought and sense of God out of the mind, the soul gravitates downward under the terrible force of its own depravity—a moral wreck, its noblest powers a mass of ruins!

2. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God.

This "looking down" has the precise sense of *bending over* as if from his high throne, much as was said of God looking into the corrupt state of the world just before the flood (Gen. 6: 12); or into Sodom (Gen. 18: 21). So here he bends over to scrutinize closely the moral state of man, and especially to "see if any were acting wisely" [not as the "fool"] "and seeking God," as the wise man would. This assumes that the truly wise will seek after God as surely as the fool will not, but will even ignore his very being.

3. They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.

"The all" [says the Hebrew], the whole body, have apostatized together; they have become morally corrupt; as the original implies, have turned sour and putrid under a process analogous to decomposition by chemical change.——"No doer of good, not even one," makes the statement perfectly sweeping, shutting off all possible exception. Of course this contemplates man as he is without God, never seeking God, and of course unblessed by gospel grace.

4. Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.

Is it credible that all these workers of iniquity are utterly without knowledge? *i. e.*, do they not know better than to persecute my people and so incur my wrath? They are eating up my people *as* men eat bread; say with avidity, or with like pleasure, or equally without compunction, and they never worship God, this being the usual sense of "calling upon God."——It seems to be implied that these wicked fools, giving themselves up to reckless persecution of God's people, do certainly know better—must know that such sin will bring down upon them the wrath of Almighty God.

5. There were they in great fear: for God *is* in the generation of the righteous.

"There," at this precise point, when they have provoked God by devouring his people, "they become awfully afraid," for "God is in the generation of the righteous"—will surely manifest his presence with them—their Helper and Avenger in all such seasons of need.

6. Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD *is* his refuge.

"The counsel of the *afflicted*" [better than "poor"] is the product of their wisdom in its relations to God—their wisdom as

dictating trust in God and obedience. You put to shame their trust in God as being in your eyes folly. You despise them for making God their refuge. How great and fatal is your mistake!

7. Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

Literally thus: "Who will give out of Zion the salvation of Israel in God's returning to the captives of his people" [or turning the captivity of his people]? "Let Jacob rejoice; let Israel be glad!"——"Who will give" is a common Hebrew idiom equivalent to, O that it might be so!——That this salvation is thought to come out of Zion results from the fact that the Zion-temple was the recognized dwelling-place of Israel's God from whom this salvation came.——Some critics, supposing the language here to refer to the restoration from captivity in Babylon, maintain that the Psalm must have been written after that event. But there is no occasion to apply the words to that restoration. Long before that period this phrase, "turn the captivity," had come into current figurative use where no real restoration from a proper captivity could have been thought of, *e. g.*, Job. 42: 10, where the Lord changed the captive state of Job as it were from bondage to liberty, yet Job was by no means a prisoner of war. So also God spake by Ezekiel (16: 53) of "turning the captivity of Sodom," where no literal restoration from a land of captivity is possible. ——Moreover, this precise form of the Hebrew verb may be translated either, God returns to his captive people; or, he turns their captive state from one of quasi bondage to one of freedom. ——According to the Masoretic interpunction and the proper construction of the Hebrew verbs ["rejoice and be glad"], the last clause stands independent of what precedes, a sudden transition from prayer for salvation to a call for joy and gladness in Israel under the assurance that his prayer is answered. "Let Jacob rejoice: let Israel be glad!"

PSALM XV.

This Psalm of David corresponds so closely with portions of Ps. 24 that we can scarcely hesitate to refer it to the same occasion, viz.: the location of the ark on Mount Zion, (see 2 Sam. 6, and 1 Chron. 13). It was thus made the visible dwelling place of Israel's God, and therefore would suggest the question, Who now shall be honored to dwell *with God* in this holy hill? Who shall enjoy this exalted privilege of special communion and fellowship with God, and consequently of his perpetual protection? This question it is the purpose of the Psalm to answer.——As a description of the thoroughly righteous man it stands in direct contrast with Ps. 14, which is a corresponding description of an intensely wicked

man. This contrast may account for its location here rather than in connection with Ps. 24.

1. LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

"Abide in thy tabernacle"—at home and made welcome there as being of the household of God, one of his intimate friends and therefore enjoying his protection. The tabernacle was now located on the Zion hill, in the city of David. See the historical account of this transaction (2 Sam. 6: 12–19).

2. He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

He whose walk, daily life, is unblemished, faultless; whose doings are right; who speaks truth with sincere heart, *i. e*, always aiming to say only the exact truth. These are positive traits and manifestations.

3. He *that* backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbor, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbor.

Here are negatives—the things he *does not*. He does not slander; literally, *foot it about with the tongue*, which seems to describe one who goes round tattling, speaking slanderously.——Does not do evil to his neighbor [intentionally]; does not take up a reproachful rumor against his neighbor—not into his heart to believe and love it, and much less to help push it on.

4. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoreth them that fear the LORD. *He that* sweareth to *his own* hurt, and changeth not.

"The despicable man," one worthy to be despised, is in his eyes rejected, contemned, according as his true character deserves. While he despises bad men, he honors the truly pious.——The last clause alludes to Lev. 5: 4, the case of one who takes an oath unadvisedly, *i. e.*, without due reflection, binding himself to do some act which will involve him in evil or in good, and is holden by the sacredness of his oath. A part only of the full phrase appears here—the case of swearing to do something which will naturally be an evil to himself. From this oath the good man changes not, recedes not, but faithfully stands to his bond.——Some modern critics translate "that sweareth to a bad man;" but this can not be accepted. The allusion to the Levitical law as above can not well be questioned.

5. *He that* putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these *things* shall never be moved.

This usury is not interest on money which is borrowed to make more money with—a commercial transaction of which the Mosaic law had no occasion to speak; but is money loaned to a poor man as the law required bread to be loaned to the suffering, upon which no interest was permitted. In the current life of the Hebrew people, no man borrowed either money or bread save under the stress of hunger, necessity, of which stress no neighbor, well to do himself, was permitted to take advantage.——A bribe to harm the innocent was an abomination to the Mosaic law—is so to all righteous law—to every upright conscience.——"Shall never be moved"—shall have a sure standing in the house of God, evermore enjoying his protection and never jostled from his sure foundation.

PSALM XVI.

The caption ascribes this Psalm to David. The one question of interpretation here which eclipses all others in importance is that of the eunuch to Philip concerning Isa. 53: "I pray thee, of whom spake the prophet this; of himself, or of some other man?" (Acts 8: 34.) The same answer is to be given here as there; the interpreter must expound his scripture "of Jesus."

The subject naturally opens with the fact that David was a *prophet* and wrote some prophecies. The apostle Peter himself, at that moment under unquestionable inspiration (Acts 2: 30), affirms this: "Therefore the patriarch David, *being a prophet*, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne," etc. This passage indeed carries us one step further and affirms on like authority and with equal certainty that *as a prophet, David spake of Christ.* "He [David] seeing this before (*i. e.*, foreseeing it with prophetic eye) spake of the resurrection of Christ that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." Here Peter quotes from the Psalm now before us, and had previously quoted from it yet more fully in this very discourse (vs. 25–28).——With a more brief quotation but no less clearly and to the same purport precisely Paul (Acts 13: 33–37) quotes from this Psalm to prove that the promised Messiah was not to experience corruption in the grave, but was to be raised from the dead before that change should take place. He even argues the point specifically to show that these words of the Psalm before us can not refer to David because he died as other men die, and "was laid to his fathers and saw corruption," according to the common lot of mortals.——Entirely coincident with this testimony to the point that the Psalm contains predictions of Christ is the authority of Jesus himself, who after his resurrection (Luke 24: 44–46) said to his disciples, "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in

the Prophets, and *in the Psalms* concerning me." "Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day." It seems therefore that Jesus spake at this time particularly of his resurrection as a point embraced in the Old Testament Prophecies. Inasmuch as the disciples who heard this conversation refer to no other prophecy as foretelling his resurrection except this one in our Psalm, and inasmuch as they do refer to this with special stress and a special argument to prove its necessary reference to Christ, there is no reason to doubt that they had their interpretation from Jesus himself. With those therefore who accept the authority of Jesus there remains no further question. With all those who admit the divine inspiration of Peter after the great effusion of the Spirit upon him, or of Paul after his conversion and special anointing as an apostle, there remains no further question on the point that this Psalm treats of Christ and definitely predicts his resurrection from the dead.

But there are other questions pertaining to this Psalm that should receive attention. Does it *all* refer to Christ? Does any part of it refer to David? Is it admissible to assume that the same words refer both to David and to Christ? Why does David speak in the first person as if of himself only? How can we determine in such a case whether he does really speak of himself, or of some other man, *e. g.*, Jesus the Messiah?——It will be quite as well to meet these questions as they are presented *in this Psalm*, as to put the answer in the more general form.——I therefore reply thus: (1.) Every specific feature in this entire Psalm admits of a natural, easy, and very appropriate reference to Christ. This will appear as we examine it word by word, verse by verse. Consequently there is no demand whatever for applying any part of it to David.——(2.) There are some features in the Psalm which positively *will not bear to be applied to David.* This both Peter and Paul have shown on the point of experiencing the corruption of the grave. Therefore we absolutely know that the Messiah is here. No other person fills the description; no other can be the subject spoken of.——There are also various other features of this description which apply with much greater pertinence and force to the Messiah than to David. That some features should be common to both David and Christ, *i. e.*, applicable to either, need not surprise us and will not when we consider that Jesus was truly human no less than divine; that his human nature was prominent in his sufferings and indeed during his entire state of humiliation while he was on earth; and that David in more than one respect was a special type or representative of the Messiah.——(3.) This latter fact sufficiently accounts for the form in which this Psalm appears—David speaking in the first person, while yet he speaks not of himself but of some other one, viz., that greater personage who was to be his Son, to sit on his throne, to pass through experiences of trial and affliction on earth, in many points analogous

to those periods in his own life, when though anointed to be king he yet was persecuted, despised, and rejected by the reigning authorities of the nation.——It is no part of our work as interpreters of prophecy to ascertain and show how far the prophet David understood what the Spirit spake through him of Christ. It would be a very interesting inquiry if we had the data for developing it and for reaching positive knowledge in the case; but what if we have not? The words which holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost remain to us just the same for our instruction, good for the truth they teach us, whether we can or can not ascertain how far the prophet David understood them.——In fine, this Psalm (and all other prophecies on the same conditions) must be accepted as real prophecy upon the following points of proof in this case: That Jesus or his inspired apostles, or both, quote them as prophecy; that the passage in question is applicable as prophecy to Christ, easily and pertinently; that there are points in it which can not be applied to any one else. These reasons seem to be entirely valid and conclusive. The reader will notice that Peter and Paul follow precisely this mode of proving that the Psalm before us is a prophecy of Christ. They had their interpretation from Christ himself; they argue that its points apply readily to Jesus, and can not apply to David or any one else.

Some of my readers may push the further question—Whether this Psalm does not speak of David and of Christ both, saying of David all that can apply to him, and of Christ all that applies fitly to him.——The main objection to this is, that it is against the nature of mind and therefore of speech to have two objects of thought and speech before the mind at once. For example, our Psalm is an expression of what we may call heart experience—the emotions, sentiments, pious exercises of some Christian heart. Every statement is in the singular number, by one speaker, and as if of himself. My argument is that it is against nature and contrary to the normal action of finite minds to suppose that such language speaks equally of two different persons. Ever so many thousands may have a similar experience; that is entirely another matter. Our question is, Does such language primarily and properly contemplate more than one subject, one person, as saying these words and having these emotions? If he were to say, "I am speaking now, not for myself only, but for another man equally and as well," then we must take his meaning as thus specially explained; but, otherwise, we must naturally understand him to speak of himself only. If he is a prophet, he may speak exclusively of some great personage who is the subject of his prophetic communications. Unity of thought and of intent is thus fully maintained. Such unity of thought and of speech is the recognized and universal law of human speech in all language, unless prophecy be an exception. My position is that prophecy can not be made an exception—that this law must obtain equally in all prophetic language, for the simple reason that in his word (prophecy included) God speaks to man in man's words—in human lan-

guage and in accordance with the well known laws of human speech. If he spake otherwise, on other principles, under other laws of speech, we could never reach his meaning with any certainty or with any well-grounded confidence.——I hardly need say that the view here presented in opposition to what is often called "the double sense," has no conflict whatever with the true doctrine of prophetic types, *i. e.*, of representative men, or representative institutions which serve to illustrate Christ and his work. The second Psalm may take its imagery and many of its prominent words from the case of David. Yet it meant not David but Christ. It speaks of Christ in words and figures that were made clear to the Jewish mind by their knowledge of the sources whence they were taken; in other words, by their knowledge of the history of David. So David's experience as a suffering man of God may furnish more or less of the words and figures in this sixteenth Psalm. But this is very far from proving that these words, as used here, speak of David.——This discussion would be an unpardonable digression if it were not the case that the subject has involved many minds in immense perplexity and confusion. ——Let us now resume the Psalm. The question of *date* in this Psalm has no practical importance.——As to *occasion*, we only require two conditions: (1) The suffering periods of David's life; (2) The light of inspiration suggesting to him that his greater Son was to have experiences in this point similar to his own.

The word "Michtam" in the title is explained variously by the best critics. It occurs at the head of five other Psalms (56–60); is thought by Gesenius, Fuerst, and Maurer to mean simply a writing, analogous to the similar word in Isa. 38: 9, at the head of Hezekiah's song. The ancient versions, indorsed by Prof. Stuart, make it an inscription, equivalent to "song of victory;" while Alexander supposes it to indicate something secret, deep—"the depth of doctrinal and spiritual import in those sacred compositions." The etymological affinities of the word are too obscure and its meaning too doubtful to afford any aid in the interpretation of the Psalm.

1. Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

In view of what has been said above of the reference of this Psalm to the Messiah, it is a perfectly reasonable supposition that it was written in prophetic anticipation of his experiences at some time, probably not long prior to his death. Several passages in his recorded history suffice to show that more than once his mind was thrown strongly upon those final conflicts of trial and suffering through which he was destined to pass. Luke records that in his transfiguration "there talked with him two men, who were Moses and Elias: who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9: 30, 31). John reports these words of his (12: 27): "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this

hour? [Nay,] since for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." And Luke, these: "I have a baptism to be baptized with (*i. e.*, of fearful suffering), and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" (12: 50.) The scenes of Gethsemane are familiar to every Bible reader. The spirit of those scenes of agony came over him more than once in his previous experience. This Psalm is fully in harmony with Gethsemane—those anticipations of trial and anguish, coupled with sweet repose in God, and on the whole a joyful acquiescence in his mission, with all its results of temporary suffering, but eternal, glorious reward. Let us, then, assume that the Psalm gives us a chapter in these heart-experiences of our Lord at some period not very long prior to his death.

"Preserve me, O God;" uphold me in these scenes of sore trial—in these anticipations of untold agony soon to be endured—"for in thee do I seek a refuge." This is more precise than our English "put my trust," since the Hebrew verb conceives of one as *flying for refuge* from some threatened evil.

2. *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my Lord: my goodness *extendeth* not to thee;

3. *But* to the saints that *are* in the earth, and *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.

"My soul hath said to Jehovah, Thou art my Lord;" *i. e.*, I have said it with all my heart. The Hebrews used the word "soul" in this way for stronger emphasis. It did not express adequately the strength of the speaker's feelings to say simply, "I have made Jehovah my Lord." Thus I understand this quite peculiar Hebrew phrase. The word for "soul" is implied, not expressed, but is indicated by the corresponding gender (feminine) in the verb, and by its second person, implying that the soul is addressed.——Thus Jesus accepted Jehovah, the ever-faithful God, as his Lord and his God, and made the strongest declaration of it which the Hebrew language and idioms can make.——In the next clause there is no Hebrew word for "*extendeth.*" It is therefore supplied arbitrarily, and the resulting sense does not recommend it. Prof. Stuart proposes a very animated construction, thus: "Source of my happiness; there is none beside thee," applying the word for "goodness" to God in direct address. Less violent and more probable is this reading: "My happiness is nothing without thee;" I have no real joy save in thee. As to the saints in the earth—"the excellent ones—all my delight is in them," *i. e.*, all the delight I find on the earth, in the society of mortals. On the one hand, in the highest possible sense, God is the sole and infinite joy of his heart; but on the other, in a lower sense, God's people who bear his image are precious to his soul, the only congenial society of earth.——It is pleasant to dwell on these words as setting before us the very heart and soul of Him whom "not having seen we love." They are remarkably in har-

mony with both his words and his life as given us in the gospel history.——We pause here a moment over the suggestion that in the strength and fullness of these declarations, their reference to Jesus is easy and every way right, but if referred to David, they seem overdone, fulsome, and therefore scarcely admissible.

4. Their sorrows shall be multiplied *that* hasten *after* another *god:* their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

The word for "sorrows," by a slight change in its vowels, is used for idol gods, thought of as *made laboriously* by human hands. Very probably this word is chosen out of several which would have the sense, *sorrow*, because it suggested the miseries of idol-worshipers—the painful unrest of those who have no better God than a manufactured idol.——The verb rendered "hasten" is of rare occurrence, yet in one clear case (Ex. 22: 15) is used for buying a wife, and very probably is chosen here with tacit allusion to idolatry as spiritual harlotry—going adulterously away from the true God to marry idol gods. The sense of the verse is plain: While I have infinite joy in the blessed God, and a lesser joy in his beloved people, they who give their hearts to idol gods have their sorrows multiplied; sorrow upon sorrow. My soul turns from them with loathing; their drink-offerings are nothing better than blood, and I can never offer them nor pollute my lips with even their names!——If it be asked, Why should Jesus speak thus of idol gods inasmuch as during his life on earth, idolatry was unknown among the Jews? the answer is that this Psalm was written by David, to be read and sung in his age and in subsequent ages when idolatry was the giant sin of the world. It was therefore every way appropriate that the Messiah should be put before the Jews as intensely abhorring idolatry.——As to the comparative facility of making these the words of Jesus on the one hand or of David on the other—as said by Jesus it is perfect. On the other side, there is no doubt that David abhorred idol gods; yet in those Psalms where he certainly speaks of himself, such declarations as this occur rarely if ever.

5. The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

6. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant *places;* yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Jehovah is my chosen portion, mine inheritance—the good which my soul rejoices in far above all other.——These several words, "inheritance," "cup," "lot," concur in the common idea of one's chosen and accepted good. So in the same sense, "the lines," *i. e.*, the measuring lines which lay out one's grounds and define his landed possessions—taken from the vocabulary of an agricultural people to signify the possessions themselves. The sentiment of verse 6 is—I am happy and satisfied with my assigned mission

and its reward. Jesus surveys the whole work allotted to him, with its promised reward, and joyfully accepts it. "For the joy set before him, he endures the cross" [heroically], "despising the shame."

7. I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

The "counsel" given him by the Lord, I take in the special sense of encouragement, exhortation—those inspirations of faith and courage and love by which the Father sustained him through every hour of sorest temptation and trial. The original word suggests this special sense. Well might the Messiah say, I will bless Jehovah, my faithful God, for these suggestions and for this moral strength in my seasons of need.——The last clause of the verse thus: "Yea, in the night season, my reins," *i. e.*, my deep thoughts, "admonish," suggest to me to bless and thank him. As I muse in the deep night I am sweetly moved to bless the Lord for his sustaining mercy.

8. I have set the LORD always before me: because *he is* at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Of set purpose and by direct effort, I place the Lord Jehovah ever before my face. I keep him in my constant view. Every thought and purpose are shaped under a sense of his present eye and hand. Because he is at my right hand, ever ready to uphold me, I shall not be moved from my sure foundation, but shall stand securely.

9. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

Therefore the Messiah has a perfect assurance of success in his great mission, and rejoices in it exceedingly. In the strong Hebrew idiom, his heart exults; his "glory," *i. e.*, his soul, his noblest powers, rejoice. The word rendered "glory" means properly the *heavy* organ, the liver; but corresponds perfectly in figurative usage with our word heart.——Even in death my flesh shall rest in the confident hope of a speedy resurrection.

10. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Literally, "thou wilt not leave my soul *to* hell," *i. e.*, surrendered to its power. The word Sheol, translated hell, is here (as not infrequently) personified to represent the ruling Power of that world of the dead. To that Power, God will not leave him—said with more special reference to his body than to his soul, considered as the spiritual part of his compound being. So the parallel clause clearly implies—"nor wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption:" thou wilt not leave thy son to experience the corruption of the body in the grave, but wilt raise him from the dead before

corruption ensues.——The last word of this verse, translated "*corruption*," has been regarded as the test word of this passage, claimed by those who deny its reference to Christ to mean simply the pit, the grave. Insisting upon the reference of this Psalm entire to David only, they are forced to evade the sense, *corruption*, since in this sense it could not apply to David. Hence they derive the word Shahhath * from another root Shuah † which means *pit*. But the root *Shahhath*—to destroy or corrupt, is the more natural one and has most usage in its favor, and moreover, has the full support of the Septuagint whose Greek word, meaning corruption, passed into the New Testament and received the practical indorsement of the apostles because they made their main argument from prophecy for the resurrection of Christ turn on this precise sense of our word. The authorities are therefore quite decisive in favor of the meaning, *corruption*.——In this construction the sentiment is every way appropriate. It was fit that the Great Conqueror of death should burst its bands and come forth from its control before even his body had experienced that decomposition by which death and the grave despoil the beauty of man and remand his flesh back to dust. Of this the Messiah was made sure on the authority of prophetic inspiration. His own words to his disciples long before his death show that he knew he should rise from the dead and even on the third day, before corruption had really begun its work. (See Matt. 16: 21, and 20: 19).

11. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence *is* fullness of joy; at thy right hand *there are* pleasures for evermore.

Thou wilt guide me to perfect bliss in thy presence, joys eternal at thy right hand. "Fullness of joy" has the sense in the Hebrew of satiety, that which will fully satisfy the utmost desires of the soul.——"At thy right hand" reminds us that the risen Jesus is continually represented as enthroned at the right hand of the Father, in supreme dignity and glory.——These visions of future reward were "the joy set before him" for which "he endured the cross and despised the shame." (Heb. 12: 2). Isaiah touches the same fact in the words, "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied." (53: 11.). Such self-sacrificing benevolence will be rewarded with infinite exaltation and blessedness, not only because such reward is intrinsically fit, but for the sake of its moral lessons to the universe of intelligent minds. Paul sets forth the same logical and moral relation between Christ's extreme humiliation on the one hand, and his infinite exaltation on the other, in the memorable words (Phil. 2: 6–11), "Wherefore (because he humbled himself and became obedient even to the extent of death on the cross, therefore) God hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name."

* שחת † (שוח)

Thus this wonderful prophetic Psalm witnesseth to the Great Messiah, giving us his various heart-experiences of anticipated suffering, of peaceful repose in God, of joyful acquiescence in his work (the suffering included), for the sake of the joy set before him; revealing also his confident assurance of a speedy resurrection from the grave, followed by perfect, eternal bliss at God's right hand. What should interest us more than to know how Jesus met and bore his anticipated sufferings, and how absolutely his soul was filled with love and trust toward his heavenly Father and with joy in his mission of suffering because of its results in the salvation of men and the infinite glory of God?

PSALM XVII.

This Psalm of David is comprehensively and appropriately called *a prayer*. It is the outpouring of a pious heart before God under bitter persecution from malicious enemies—enemies who manifestly had slandered and even maligned him, and therefore made it proper for him to assert his innocence and integrity. He casts himself upon God for justice and for succor from his enemies.——This Psalm corresponds well to the experiences of David, persecuted by Saul.

1. Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry; give ear unto my prayer, *that goeth* not out of feigned lips.

This prayer, "Hear the right," implies a full consciousness of personal uprightness as to the points involved between the suppliant and his adversaries. He does not ask of God any favoritism or partiality, but simple righteousness.——The prayer which he offers goes forth *from lips not deceitful*, but which speak truly what an honest heart feels.

2. Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.

"My sentence" is my judgment or decree as from a court of justice or from the Supreme King. The verbs in Hebrew are future, as if expressing his strong assurance, yet put in such a way as to imply the prayer that such things may yet be. "My sentence *shall* come forth from thy throne (let it not fail so to come!); "thine eyes *will* discern all equity" (so may it be!).

3. Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited *me* in the night; thou hast tried me, *and* shalt find nothing: I am purposed *that* my mouth shall not transgress.

"Proved" as metals are proved and purified in the furnace.—— "Hast visited me in the night"—when, secluded from social influence, and left to his own thought, man is himself; thinking

evil if so inclined, but good and good only if a truly honest man. ——"Thou hast tried me" as with fire, for so the original implies, and shalt find no dross, no deceit.——The last clause has been construed variously: "My mouth shall not exceed my thought," (Alexander); "My thoughts transgress not my command, *i. e.*, do not swerve from the law of God and of virtue which I have imposed on myself" (Gesenius); "My thinking did not go beyond my mouth" (Fuerst); "Thou shalt not find me plotting evil; my mouth shall not transgress" (Maurer); "No iniquity shall be found in me; my mouth shall not speak the words of men" (Septuagint and Vulgate)—which connect this verse with the first clause of the verse following. The reader will notice that the general sentiment remains substantially the same through all these slight diversities.——Several circumstances combine to occasion these diversities, *e. g.*, that the word translated, "am purposed" may be used either in a good sense or a bad; either for the thoughtful, solemn purpose of good, or for the cunning, malicious purpose of evil; also that the word for *transgress* may stand with or without an object—may be either transitive or intransitive. Then again, the Masorites have complicated the difficulties of the passage by indicating that in their opinion the word for "purposed" is not a verb in the preter, but a noun or an infinitive. But for this opinion of theirs, the construction given in our English version would, I judge, have been readily adopted. I incline to adopt it notwithstanding, for even taking this contested word as an infinitive or a noun we may translate, "According to my earnest purpose, my mouth shall not transgress."

4. Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer.

"Concerning the works of men" is said of the evil doings of bad men. From these the Psalmist kept himself by carefully observing the words of the Lord, the words that had fallen from his lips.——"Paths of the destroyer" are the ways of life pursued by men of violence and blood. Once and again David might have taken the life of Saul by violence, but he restrained himself, saying, "I must not lift up my hand against the Lord's anointed." The word of Jehovah's lips had said, "Vengeance is mine"—and these words kept him from violence, the usual way of bad men. See 1 Sam. 26: 8–11, 23 and 24: 3–19 and Deut. 32: 35.

5. Hold up my goings in thy paths, *that* my footsteps slip not.

6. I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, *and* hear my speech.

7. Show thy marvelous loving-kindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust *in thee* from those that rise up *against them.*

Such a temptation to violence as that which had almost ensnared David to take the life of Saul suggested the need of such prayer as this, that God would continually uphold him and make him strong in the right way.——"Show thy marvelous loving-kindness" is more precisely, show thy loving-kindness *to be marvelous*—make the manifestations of it to be glorious in the case of thy servant.——Beautiful indeed is the form of this address to the Hearer of prayer—"O thou that savest by thy right hand all who trust in thee from their uprising foes."

8. Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

9. From the wicked that oppress me, *from* my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.

The original is fine: "Keep me as the little man, the daughter of the eye," *i. e.*, the pupil of the eye in which you may see the little man—the very diminutive image of yourself, which, regardless of gender, the Hebrews spake of also as "the daughter of the eye." Both God's care in the construction of the eye, and the instinct of man under a consciousness of its priceless value, conspire to the keeping of the eye above all other keeping, thus making it an admirable illustration of the care with which we fitly pray God to keep us from all sin and harm.——"Hide me under the shadow of thy wings," looks toward the mother birds who shield their young under their outspread wings, close to their warm bosom. Both these figures come naturally from those charming words of Moses (Deut. 32: 10, 11): "He found him" [the Lord found Israel] "in a desert land and in the waste, howling wilderness: he led him about, he instructed him, *he kept him as the apple of his eye.* As an eagle stirreth up her nest; fluttereth over her young; spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead him," etc.

10. They are inclosed in their own fat; with their mouth they speak proudly.

The Hebrews associate excessive fatness [obesity] with the dullest moral perceptions, and a hard, stubborn, and proud heart. Moses leads in this thought (Deut. 32: 10); "Jeshurun [the upright one] waxed fat and kicked" [with allusion to well fed animals]. Job says (15: 25–27) of the man who "strengtheneth himself against the Almighty, running upon the thick bosses of his buckler"—"*Because* he covereth his face with his fatness and maketh collops of fat on his flanks"—as if this excessive fatness produced the most defiant hardihood against God. In Ps. 73: 7–9, we have this portrait: "Their eyes stand out with fatness: they are corrupt; they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens," etc., and Ps. 119: 70: "Their heart is as fat as grease; but I [all unlike them] delight in thy law." Isaiah (6: 10) has the same conception.

11. They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;

12. Like as a lion *that* is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

"They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth," connected closely with "encompassing the steps of the righteous," supposes them to follow their track with sharp eye and head inclined forward, chasing them down; or as the lion lying in wait and impatient for the moment to spring upon his victim.

13. Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, *which is* thy sword:

14. From men *which are* thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, *which have* their portion in *this* life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid *treasure:* they are full of children, and leave the rest of their *substance* to their babes.

"Disappoint," should rather be intercept; or more precisely, rush in before him, *i. e.*, between me and my deadly foe; and break him down; lay him low at my feet.——In the last clause, the Hebrew leaves us to decide by the context and the nature of the case between these two constructions—that of our English text, and that of the English margin; that is, between placing "sword" in apposition to the wicked; or putting a preposition before it—*by* thy sword; in the former case with the idea that God used those wicked men as his instrument in scourging David; in the latter, he prays to God: Draw thy sword against my foes to cut them off. The Hebrew will bear either construction and therefore does not decide this point. The latter construction seems to me much more in harmony with the course of thought here than the former. While it is true that God sometimes uses the wicked *as* his instrument to scourge good men erring, the scope of this Psalm does not intimate the presence of this truth in the writer's mind. He does not think of these wicked men as doing God's work, but rather as doing their own; nor of himself as suffering under God's righteous visitation through the hands of ungodly men, but as suffering unjustly from the causeless malice of the wicked. I therefore prefer to read: "Deliver my soul from the wicked by thy sword."—— The same considerations should determine the construction in v. 14, thus: "Deliver my soul from men *by* thy hand, O Lord, yea, from men—from the world—(where we have the same preposition before "*world*" as before "*men*"), *i. e.*, from worldly men as opposed to the godly, who are also further described as having their portion in this life, prospered in wordly good, blessed to their heart's desire with children and with wealth to leave to them when they die.

15. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

The Hebrew makes the antithesis between the writer and his rich and powerful enemies, very strong: I, *for my part*, have a far different lot from theirs. My treasures are not of the earth, consist not in being satisfied with children and with wealth enough to enjoy with them while I live and to leave for them at my death. but it shall suffice for me to behold thy face in purity and integrity sc as to ensure thy favor; it shall be enough for me tc have the blissful satisfaction of awaking from the sleep of death in thine own blessed image!

On this passage the great question of interpretation is whether David thinks of the enjoyment of God's favor *here in this world*, or *in the world to come;* whether this beholding the face of God is only those manifestations of his favor which pertain to earth, or those which pertain to heaven: also whether the awaking is from natural sleep only, each morning; or from the sleep of death in the resurrection of the just; and whether "in thy likeness" means "with thine appearance," as Dr. Alexander puts it, or in thy perfect moral image in the sense of the Apostle John; "We shall be like him for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3: 2).

I have already indicated my preference for the construction which refers this passage to the future life. In support of it I urge, (1) That the words themselves not only admit but with considerable force demand this construction. "Beholding the face of God" will not have its legitimate meaning filled out until we reach heaven. "Awaking" is painfully meager and inept if applied to rising from one's nightly sleep, but is not only pertinent but sublimely glorious when said of the resurrection from the grave. "With thy likeness" a Hebrew word which legitimately means *form, image*, as of what is shaped, fashioned, has no proper sense if applied to each morning's rising from sleep, but is pregnant with grand significance as spoken of the resurrection body clothed upon with immortality.——I also urge, (2) That the context—the relation of thought in this antithesis between David and his wicked persecutors, demands the reference of his words to the future life. They are "men of this world;" he of another: "they have their portion in this life;" he in the next: they are satisfied with children; he, with his final awaking in the divine image: they make out a sort of immortality by leaving their wealth to their sons and to their sons' sons after them; but David's immortality is simply that of the just—the glorious inheritance laid up for God's children.——These two comprehensive considerations constitute in my view the legitimate arguments by which the main question must be determined. I submit to the reader whether they are not decisive.——That a large number of German critics, assuming that David knew nothing about the resurrection or the future blessed life, should see here only a man enjoying a consciousness of personal integrity and a sense of God's approbation, awaking from sleep each morning with these views of himself and of God, refreshed by the grateful invigoration of repose, does not

greatly surprise me. But that Dr. Alexander, a very judicious commentator who almost never misses the Christian sense of God's word, should endorse those views, is at once surprising and sad. His words are: "A third interpretation puts a still higher sense upon the phrase as referring to the act of awaking from the sleep of death. But this excludes too much from view the enjoyment of God's favor and protection even here, which is the burden of the whole prayer. If the hope of future blessedness had been enough, the previous petitions would have been superfluous."—— But it might be asked, Is it superfluous for Christians to pray for protection of life, for the measure of earthly good which it may please God to grant, *because* they deeply feel that "the hope of future blessedness is enough?" David was bearing the responsibilities of a throne and of a great people, yea, of God's earthly kingdom: might he not pray that God would save him from his powerful foes and gird him for his earthly work, and also with all this, feel most fully that his supreme and only satisfying joys are in the promised resurrection of the just and in that perfect image of his Maker in which he should one day rise to a glorious immortality?

PSALM XVIII.

This remarkable Psalm indicates not only its author but its object—David, writing after the Lord had delivered him from all his enemies and especially from Saul—writing to recount the dangers through which the Lord had borne him in safety, declaring his love to his gracious Protector, delightfully reiterating the thought that God's own hand and this alone had wrought for him these signal deliverances and made him triumphant over all his foes. The last verse alludes definitely to his anointed Son—the Great Messiah—destined of God to be his successor on an eternal throne according to the promise in 2 Sam. 7—a fact which seems to locate the writing of this Psalm at a point subsequent to that prophetic announcement to him, and to show that David saw in the deliverances achieved for himself a first installment of God's promised deliverances for his Zion through the Great Redeemer. ——This song, with only slight variations, appears in the historical book (2 Sam. 22).

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day *that* the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

1. I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

2. The LORD, *is* my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, *and* my high tower.

Nothing can surpass the pertinence, simplicity, and beauty of this first utterance: "I will love thee, O Lord, my strength." My grateful heart shall give thee its purest love in the overflowing of its warmest gratitude for thy saving mercy to me through many long years of peril.——The reader will also notice the accumulation of oriental and ancient terms to express the one idea that God and God only had saved him.——Here are two Hebrew words meaning rock, the second (in the middle of v. 2) being translated in our version, "my strength." "Fortress," "high tower," "horn of salvation," "buckler," "deliverer," all combine to show how strongly David felt the truth he uttered and how his mind labored to give it full expression.

3. I will call upon the LORD, *who is worthy* to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

The use of the future tense in this Psalm should be particularly noted as a point of some difficulty, yet of real interest. I incline somewhat strongly to this construction, viz.: that in these future verbs (as here "I *will* call") the writer throws himself back in thought into the midst of those scenes to reproduce the feelings of those hours and testify to his words and thoughts *then*, assuming doubtless that he thinks and feels essentially so still. The verses before us would take this turn: In those scenes of peril I said, "I will call upon the Lord, evermore to be praised; and I shall be saved from all my enemies." I thought and felt so then; I think and feel so now.

4. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

5. The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

The word "sorrows" should be read *bands* or cords, meaning, I was as one bound for death, like an ox bound for the slaughter. This is the usual and well established sense of the original word. It is moreover strongly implied in both the verbs used with it, (that in v. 4 and that in v. 5, which are unlike in Hebrew, though both are translated "compassed" in our version). "Bands compassed me," were drawn firmly round me. These Hebrew verbs could scarcely be used of pains, sorrows. That *pangs* should *seize* upon one is a Hebrew conception; but it is not Hebrew usage that pangs become cords and ropes to gird a prisoner round and hold him fast.——In harmony with this is the last clause of v. 5: Snares, deadly, fatal gins, were immediately before me, in my very path, so that it seemed I could not take another step without being caught in their grasp. The old sense of the word "prevent" is precisely this; they came in directly before me; they lay under my very feet.——In v. 5, "hell" [Sheol] is essentially synonymous with "death" in the parallel clause in v. 4. The sense in both words is that he seemed to himself bound and

drawn unto death, a captive in the power of Death personified, on the point of being dragged to his bloody altar to be immolated there. The meaning is not at all that he had an awful foretaste or even fear of the pains of the future hell, thought of as the final doom of the wicked.——In the clause, "Floods of ungodly men," etc., the abstract, wickedness, or more precisely, worthlessness, would be more exactly the sense of the Hebrew word. He thinks of human depravity as a torrent rushing upon him to affright his soul and threaten his certain destruction.

6. In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his ears.

Every verb in this verse is in the future tense, to be constructed as said above on v. 3. In my straitness [I said] I will call upon the Lord and to my God will I lift up my cry; he will hear my voice, etc. So I felt then; so I said; so I did. It is refreshing now to remember how my agonized heart cried out after God, and how my faith and God's open ear and strong hand bore me safely through.——That he thinks of God as "hearing *out of* his temple" is due to that remarkable feature in the divine arrangement with Israel whereby he made the most holy place, whether in the tabernacle or temple, his visible abode, and directed his people to pray toward this earthly dwelling-place of his. In dedicating the temple he had built, Solomon continually speaks of "praying toward this house" (1 Kings 8: 29, 30, etc). On the same principle of condescending accommodation to the infancy of the most advanced human thought, God encourages his people to speak of their cry as "coming up before him even into his ear." It gives us a life-like impression of One who tenderly bends to the voice of our cry and opens the ear to every word of humble prayer.

7. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.

8. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

God hears the cry of his suffering, imperiled servant, and rouses himself to his rescue. Indignant that wicked men should set upon him thus to distress and even destroy him, he gives expression to this hot indignation. David gives the freest play to his poetic genius, or shall we rather say, his enkindled soul pours forth its poetic fire to do justice if he can to the manifestations of God's righteous judgment upon his enemies. "Then the earth did shake and quake" (all nature in sympathy with its great Maker); the very foundations of the hills rocked under his earthquake tread, for God was aroused to fierce indignation.——In v. 8, "there went up a smoke," etc.; it is supposable that the poet's

imagination conceives of the convulsions of nature as giving best expression to the emotions of its Author, and at this point sees the open volcano emitting columns of heavy smoke and sheets of lurid flame. It is God in his awful majesty! So before the sweep of God's righteous providence Saul was hurried on to a fearful death, and Absalom also. David lived to see every one of his prominent enemies slain.——In the Hebrew which stands for the clause, "The earth shook and trembled," the reader would notice that singular assonance which I have sought to reproduce in the words, Then the earth did *shake* and *quake*. It is more than probable that the words David used suggested by their very sound the rush and crash of nature's elements in this august crisis.

9. He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness *was* under his feet.

10. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

It is not enough that God should speak through nature, giving it a thousand voices of earthquake and of storm to utter forth his indignation. He must needs come down himself to the rescue of his accepted suppliant. So we see here: "He bowed the heavens;" his lofty dwelling-place and glorious throne seemed themselves to come down toward the earth; *God came near*. Darkness gathered about his sacred feet. "He rode upon a cherub" (the winged angel figures of the most holy place furnish the poetic conception). He flew on wings of wind. Rapidity and majesty blend in the grandeur and power of this scene.

11. He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him *were* dark waters *and* thick clouds of the skies.

12. At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail *stones* and coals of fire.

Darkness and storm are in the ascendant here. "Dark waters," are not waters resting on the earth of a dark black color, but are rather clouds made black, dark, and heavy, by being fully charged with water.——V. 12 might be read, From the brightness before him (flashes of lightning) his heavy clouds swept on with hail and lightning. Coals of fire in this connection can be none other than the sheets of lightning out of these awful storm-clouds.

13. The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail *stones* and coals of fire.

14. Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

The thunder-storm stands out here in every word. The voice of God here as throughout Ps. 29 is simply thunder. "Coals of fire" are only lightnings. Changing the figure yet again, these

are God's arrows with which he discomfits his foes. The word "*them*" after the verbs "scattered" and "discomfited" represents his enemies for whose destruction he bowed the heavens and came down.

15. Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

The conception seems to be that the solid globe is convulsed and even uptorn so that the water-courses of the underground springs and rivers are brought to view, and the very foundations of the mountains are laid bare by this rebuke of the Almighty—this blast of the breath of his indignation.——The word rendered "nostrils" often and probably here has the sense of indignation, as also in v. 8.

16. He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

All the Hebrew verbs in this verse and the next are in the future tense, for which I see no other explanation so satisfactory as that above given, viz.: that the poet throws himself back into the midst of those scenes and gives us the very thoughts and feelings of his soul then and there; I said, "he will send forth his hand and take me."——The Hebrew verb "drew" carries us back to the case of Moses whom his mother *drew* out of the waters of the Nile, a saved boy, and therefore gave him this name, *Drew*. The name Moses is from the verb used both here and there for *drawing* one out of the water, meaning the *drawn-out boy*. Thus David compares himself with Moses, in a similar way drawn out of the great deep waters of his perils from bloody enemies.

17. He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

18. They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

19. He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

The same thought is expanded. "Prevented me," as above; they planted themselves immediately before me; they environed my steps.——"Into a large place" as opposed to a straitened, shut-up place, where, hedged in on every side, he could not escape, but must fall an easy prey to his pursuers. In those Oriental countries where so commonly men in peril sought safety only in flight, this figure would be at once plain and forcible. A mounted Arab or a swift-footed mountaineer asked only a fair field for a race, and distance became his safety. Cornered in the fastnesses of the hills, either of them would be an easy prey.——The last clause of v. 19 advances to a new thought upon which he proceeds to enlarge, viz.: that God delivered him because he approved of his life and spirit,

and had chosen him therefore, a "man after his own heart" to ascend the throne of Israel, and hence after a sufficient baptism of suffering and trial, after an adequate discipline to his faith and patience and resignation to God's will, he seats him securely on that throne.

20. The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

21. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

22. For all his judgments *were* before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

23. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

24. Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

How shall we understand these assertions as to personal righteousness? Does David mean to affirm of himself sinless perfection unqualifiedly, and to affirm it of the entire period of his religious life; or shall we restrict his words to the great point at issue as between himself and his political enemies?——A question of this sort should not be decided upon any other considerations save the legitimate demands of the context and the nature of the case. Obviously these statements are made here to show *why the Lord interposed for his help.* It suffices therefore to account for these protestations of innocence and integrity, to understand him as referring only to his conduct in relation to his enemies, of whom we may well take king Saul as a specimen case. David did not strike for the throne of Israel of his own motion, but only because God called him. When thus called he did not ambitiously hasten and force his way to the throne, but quietly waited the slow movements of God's providence. When his life was imperiled and his footsteps tracked and hunted down from Dan to Beersheba, he never retaliated. When he might have done so, he withheld his hand, never striking at Saul's life, nor even touching a hair of his head—in all which he was deeply conscious of having sought to please God and of having been essentially upright before him. In those great points at issue he had been right and Saul wrong. This obviously is what he meant to say in these verses, and apparently *all* he meant to say. The scope of this Psalm demands no broader and no other application of his words than this. Hence I conclude that this is their true construction. The question whether at this writing David had lived a sinless life and how long, if at all, does not come in here appropriately, and finds no evidence here bearing toward its legitimate answer.

25. With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt show thyself upright;

26. With the pure thou wilt show thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt show thyself froward.

The doctrine of these verses is that God deals with men according to their character and deserts. The only difficult clause is the last, "With the froward thou wilt show thyself froward." "Froward" means perverse, and usually in the bad moral sense. Must we then say that God deals perversely, subverting moral rectitude, with the perverse sinner? By no means. Every element in his nature forbids. But does not this language affirm precisely this? Not at all. The language is shaped in close correspondence with the three clauses immediately preceding. It follows those three clauses in its form perfectly; this accounts for the application of the word "froward" to God. The meaning is that if men pursue a tortuous, crooked course toward God, perpetually swerving from the straight line of moral rectitude, he can shift his course to meet and baffle them at every point. He can make his course as crooked *physically* as they do theirs *morally*. They can never make so tortuous a path morally that God can not follow them up in the course of his physical visitations of judgment and bring on them a righteous retribution. This perfect retribution from God is precisely the thing affirmed throughout these verses. The Psalmist meant to say that the wicked never can be too cunning, too artful, to be detected and scourged, punished, by the all-knowing and all-powerful God.

27. For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.

28. For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

29. For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

That God will save the afflicted and abase the proud, are truths often reiterated in these Psalms, yet always precious. David felt them to be so because they had touched his personal experience.——"Light my candle," "illumine my darkness," are words full of precious significance. Blessed are they whose life, like David's, is full of it!——David had the physical as well as the moral qualities of a great warrior. Remarkably he sees God's hand in the gift of these qualities. By Thee have I rushed through whole troops of foes; By my God have I over-leaped walls—the high walls of strong cities. Thus the scope of this Psalm goes beyond mere protection—David upon the defensive and God warding off violent assaults; for here David takes the offensive and becomes mighty through God to rush upon the serried hosts of his enemies, or to scale the walls of their strong cities.

30. *As for* God, his way *is* perfect: the word of the

LORD is tried: he *is* a buckler to all those that trust in him.

31. For who *is* God save the LORD? or who *is* a rock save our God?

God's ways with his true servants are "*perfect*" in the sense of meeting all their emergencies as in this context, both for defense and offense against enemies, either or both as the case may require.——"The word of the Lord" seems here to be his word of *promise*, which is proved, David would say, in my experience. I came to him in my distress and sought his help and pled his promise, never in vain!——The two most common names of God are used here, not at random, but with exquisite pertinence. "Who is Elohim"—the Almighty God—"save Jehovah"—the ever faithful One whose word of promise I have tried and proved; "or who is a *Rock*"—of all sustaining strength—"save our Elohim"—the Mighty One?

32. *It is* God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

33. He maketh my feet like hind's *feet*, and setteth me upon my high places.

34. He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

Feet swift as the hind's enabled David, fleeing before Saul, to make his escape with comparative ease. "Set upon his high places," he was up beyond the reach of the weapons of ancient warfare.——"Bow of steel"—better of *brass*, since the word is most often so used, and we know that brass was in use for bows long before steel was, if indeed steel was ever in such use. The word for "broken" probably means to be sprung or bent, in readiness for throwing its arrow.

35. Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

In the clause, "Thy gentleness hath made me great," "gentleness" seems not quite the word. The original, as applied to men, means usually humility, lowliness; and as used of God, *condescension*, said, it would seem, with special reference to God's bending low to his prayer and coming down low, *i. e.*, from the high heavens above, in his glorious help. The Hebrew verb from which this noun comes means both to *answer* and to be *lowly*—ideas which naturally blend, for all answering implies more or less inclination toward, but especially is this true of God's answering to his lowly creature, man.

36. Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

37. I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

38. I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

To "enlarge one's steps" is to give him ample standing and a strong position.——It should not be forgotten that David fought his battles not for himself or for any selfish object, but as the Lord's consecrated servant. Hence such words as these have a legitimate place in this sacred, grateful song. Otherwise they would be utterly out of place here.

39. For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

40. Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

To "give to David the necks of his enemies" is, in the expressive phrase of the Hebrew, to give them to him *by the neck*, or neck-wise—to place their necks in his power.

41. They cried, but *there was* none to save *them: even* unto the LORD, but he answered them not.

In their distress they cried to their own God, but in vain; or if to the real Jehovah, still he was no God of theirs—was not the God they intelligently or sincerely worshiped. The story of Jonah shows that the uninstructed heathen may cry in their distress to the god of the storm, or to the god who wields the destinies of battle; and perhaps this is what David intended to say.

42. Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

This portion of the Psalm contemplates the wars of David against the various heathen nations contiguous, from whom under the Judges and Saul the nation had often suffered severely—Philistia, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Syria. The figure in this verse indicates the thoroughness, not to say severity, with which he executed his high commission against them. The short-coming of Saul (1 Sam. 15:) sent of God to destroy Amalek, was before his eyes as a warning.

43. Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; *and* thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people *whom* I have not known shall serve me.

44. As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.

45. The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

"Strivings of the people," meaning by "people" the Gentile and hostile nations encircling Israel, over all whom the Lord made David victorious.——The word rendered, "Shall submit themselves unto me," implies that they *lie* to him to gain his favor, perhaps after the manner of the Gibeonites (Josh. 9), but certainly implying great fear of his power.——"Be afraid out of their close places" is precisely—They come forth with fear from their hiding-places, assured of their insecurity there and having no hope but in complete, not to say abject, submission.

46. The LORD liveth; and blessed *be* my Rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

47. *It is* God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.

48. He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

"The Lord liveth" can not be taken as a form of the solemn oath, as these words are used in some connections, nor as a prayer that God may live, which in its strict sense is entirely uncalled for; but as a fact in which his obedient people may forever exult. David would say: It is my supreme joy that my Jehovah liveth forever and ever: blessed be *He* who is the Rock of my salvation.——"It is God who giveth me revenges," *i. e.*, who avenges my cause, and for my sincere devotion to him makes me victorious over my foes. But David recognizes the cause for which he lived and for which he waged his wars as rather God's than his own—*i. e.*, as God's *before* it was his, and as his only because it was God's and himself God's servant. Hence his joy in God who had interposed for his own purposes and for his own glory.

49. Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

The remarkable thing here is that David would send the voice of his thanksgiving to God forth abroad among the heathen nations. It was no part of his faith that the true religion was for Hebrews only. It was a joy to his large heart to make known God's wonderful works and his exalted nature to the nations of the wide earth, all along down the coming ages. It is interesting to note that Paul (Rom. 15: 9) caught the spirit of this passage and applied it to the conversion of the Gentiles.

50. Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and showeth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.

"To his king"—to me only because I am *his* anointed king, called by his prophet to serve him in this capacity; saved from all my enemies and finally made secure and triumphant on his throne

to do his work in Israel.——"Mercy to his *anointed*" might in itself not improperly be extended to apply to every anointed king on the throne of Israel, but the explanatory clause which follows demands this large application, yet with very special reference to his greater Son, the one supreme Messiah. In particular the eternal duration here contemplated—"for evermore"—can be fitly applied only to the great Messiah. Hence it is plain that in the subjugation of his national enemies, in their ready subjection to his scepter, and in the retribution which God brought upon his persistent enemies, David thought of himself as the great representative of the true Messiah. His thought was: Such deliverances will the mighty God work for his then future king; such achievements the gospel forces of the coming age are destined to effect. The Psalm has an element of prophecy running through it but developing itself with special clearness, in these closing verses. Well might this element enkindle David's songs and give fresh impulse to his praises of God among all the heathen. And let every Christian reader say, *Amen!*

PSALM XIX.

This Psalm is in two parts: in the first (v. 1–6) the visible heavens come before us as witnesses for God: in the second (v. 7–14) God's written law is presented, both in its qualities and in its moral effects. Comprehensively we might say here is, first, *nature;* secondly, *revelation.* Both are thought of as *books* from God; both as proclaiming his character, witnessing to his glorious majesty and his matchless wisdom and beneficence. The Psalm has been admired in all ages for its exquisite poetry, its comprehensive and pertinent thought, and for its sublime moral lessons. It gives us new views of the breadth and comprehensiveness of David's mind, and of his noble appreciation of the works of God in both these great fields of his revelation to mortals.

1. The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.

The "heavens" are here the lower visible heavens with special reference to the heavenly bodies (so called); and the "firmament" is no other than the great concave sky, called the "firmament" because supposed to be solid matter, of firm, concave surface, in which the stars were fixed and along the face of which the sun and the moon swept over their respective pathways to fulfill their destined mission.——A more precise rendering of the Hebrew heightens the impression: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; the firmament is setting before us the work of his hands"—constantly, now and evermore, with no cessation, no intermission. "Telling" as from a book, a written narrative, as the He

brew word indicates.——"Handiwork" is not his easily made work, but simply the work of his hands.——"The glory of God" is no other than the glorious qualities of his character—his wisdom, power, and beneficence. Every thing in this vast field of nature above our heads is magnificent and beautiful, grand in its order and method, vast in its proportions, and, above all, beneficent in its provisions of light and heat for the good of man and of all sentient beings.——Let it also be noted that the names of the Deity used here are not taken up at random, but are wisely chosen. "El,' the Mighty One, the Great Creator and Ruler of all, is he whose glory the heavens are telling. It is *as* such a glorious Creator and disposer of all the worlds in space that the heavens are forever proclaiming his glory. On the other hand, the giver of the law (vs. 7–14) is "Jehovah," the God of the Covenant, the God of the promises, the God who first revealed the significance of this name, "Jehovah," to Moses and to Israel (Ex. 6: 3 and 3: 11–15), in calling his people forth from Egypt and giving them then his moral law together with statutes and judgments under which they might walk in communion with him as their revealed Lord and Father.

2. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge.

"Day to day will pour out speech; night to night will set forth knowledge"—the future tense indicating that this both is and will be their perpetual function. "Day unto day" means that each day bears its witness in perpetual succession, as if one testified in harmony with another and each in harmony with all. Each day and each night come forward as witnesses to the same glory of their Maker, each true to its mission of service, each prompt to its appointed work in perfect method, with unvarying order, in military precision. The "speech" which the day uttered forth is no other than this witnessing testimony to the glory of the Great Maker of all. The "knowledge" which each night reveals to man is knowledge concerning the mighty God who made the countless worlds of the evening sky.

3. *There is* no speech nor language, *where* their voice is not heard.

4. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

As if conscious that his bold poetic conception of the heavens as a *book* and of *speech* uttered by one day after another might need some qualification, he checks himself here for explanation. Not real speech; no actual words; no articulate voice is heard; and yet their line, their musical utterance, the ring of their sweet melody goes forth through all the earth, and their poetic words to the ends of the world. The English version obscures the sense by introducing the words, "*there is*" and "*where.*" The true sense

appears when we simply translate the words given in the Hebrew as above. "No speech; no words; no [literal] voice of theirs is heard."——In v. 4, "their line" is taken by some to mean their *measuring* line, in the sense, the range or scope of their domain fills the wide world; but the context and the parallel term, "words,' concur to justify the sense—their *melody*, the ring or twang of their melodious utterance.——Remarkably the Hebrew term for "words" in the last clause of v. 4, is used only in poetry—their words, poetically conceived, sound forth to the ends of the world. The entire passage is full of exquisite beauty.

5. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which *is* as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, *and* rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

6. His going forth *is* from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

In these heavens God hath pitched a tent for the sun—a statement which is the more remarkable because, according to the astronomical conceptions of that age, this tent was not located in the visible heavens, but below the horizon, under the earth, the sun dropping into it at his setting, and coming forth from it fresh and lovely as a bridegroom from his chamber; vigorous as a strong man trained for the race. Then he sweeps athwart the heavens from the distant East to the farthest West, and nothing can escape the heat of his beams. Vegetation starts into fresh life at his touch; all living things and creatures rejoice in his light and heat. His ministries of good pervade the wide earth from the end of heaven, the eastern horizon, to the uttermost end of it on the face of the western sky.——These conceptions of the heavenly bodies are thoroughly poetical, *i. e.*, such as the imagination paints, and they follow the current astronomical thought and speech of that age. It is their charm and glory, not alone that they are unsurpassed in poetic beauty, but that they have an eye to see God in all his works, and that they witness so forcibly to the impression which the visible heavens made upon the soul of "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." His shepherd life made him familiar with the face of the evening as well as of the morning sky. We must suppose that his eye had been often turned upward and fastened upon the great bodies which stand forth in these visible heavens—those that bestud the firmament in the night season, as well as upon that grand monarch of the day who during his race from eastern sky to western throws all else into the shade. In all these he saw God, the great Maker and Father of all.

7. The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple.

8. The statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the

heart: the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes.

9. The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether.

Here are six corresponding and nearly parallel statements in three pairs, all treating of essentially the same written *law of God*, though under six different designations; "law," "testimony," "statutes," commandments," "the fear of the Lord," and "his judgments;" in each case giving one defining characteristic in a single word, and then adding one statement as to its precious results or effects—all with the same systematic order.——It will be asked, What precisely does the Psalmist mean by "law," "commandment?" etc. Is it the moral law of the ten commandments and this only; or is it this, including also all the statutes, civil or religious, of the Mosaic code? The latter, manifestly, and nothing less, if we may judge from the variety of terms and phrases used here, and from the fact that precisely those terms and phrases are used to represent the entire civil, ceremonial, and religious code as given by the Lord through Moses. I can see no reason for restricting the language to the ten commandments. Indeed there are many things in the historic portions of the Pentateuch, falling naturally under the head of "judgments," *e. g.*, the visitations of God upon Sodom, Egypt, Pharaoh, Korah, etc., which had their moral lessons no less truly than the statute laws. It would seem more appropriate to include these than to exclude every thing but the ten commandments. The written law as it was in the hand of David could not have been less and perhaps may not have been more than the Pentateuch. This was known by the Jews through all ages as distinctively "the Law," and as given through Moses [John 1: 17].

Psalm 119 is precisely an expansion of these verses [7–12], with the same leading phrases, the same strain of thought, only opened and enlarged much more fully in the line of the writer's heart-experiences of love, esteem, admiration for this "law of the Lord."——This law is here said to be "perfect," *i. e.*, complete and without defect; and "converting" or more precisely *restoring* "the soul," as the same words are used (Ps. 23: 3)—"he restoreth my soul," *i. e.*, renews its spiritual strength. According to its primary sense, this word might refer to spiritual conversion from sin to holiness; it might also refer to spiritual quickening, imparted to one already converted. The general strain of this passage, however, must apply to a child of God, one who loves the law of God and who purposely and earnestly sets himself to a holy life and studies the law of God as the legitimate means for discovering and expelling his "errors and secret faults." Hence it is best to interpret this word accordingly.——"The testimony of the Lord," a name applied to the law because it is his testimony against sin, wrong-doing, and in favor of the right, "is

sure," literally reliable, veracious, truth only with no admixture of error or falsehood. "It maketh wise the *simple*," who are here, not the easily seduced—the sense common in Solomon's writings—but those who are open and simple-hearted as opposed to prejudice, a stubborn self-will and self-made moral blindness. ——"The statutes of the Lord are right," commending themselves as right to every honest conscience; and gladdening the hearts of all who love equity.——"The commandment of the Lord is pure," morally faultless; and "it enlightens the eyes," either in the sense of revealing new light as to human duty, or of inspiring hope and joy, *i. e.*, of dispelling darkness and gloom and of shedding the light of gladness on the soul. The latter is a very common conception in the Hebrew writings. But there can be no strong objection to the sense of spiritual illumination as to truth and duty.——"The fear of the Lord" is somewhat often made synonymous with true piety, and seems here to be transferred to that which begets piety, viz.: the law of God. We are pressed to this construction by the tenor of the whole passage. The writer had perhaps mostly exhausted the Hebrew synonyms for law, and therefore indulged himself in this license of using a phrase which describes a state of heart for that which naturally produces it; the name of the cause being given to the effect.——"Clean" is here in its moral sense, pure, undefiled. "Standing forever," never to be abrogated. The great moral lessons of even the ceremonial and sacrificial system could never lose their force. The form might change; the spirit never.—— "Judgment" has a broad range of possible meanings—*e. g.*, statutes, considered as expressions of the divine will; the decisions of a ruler or judge, passed upon moral actions; and sometimes even the execution of a legal sentence, and especially the punishment which God visits upon sin. The drift of the passage and the demands of substantial parallelism favor the sense first above indicated, that of *statutes*, as the leading idea. They are declared to be true and all righteous.

10. More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb.

"More to be desired"—strictly, loved, cherished, valued—and measured here by that which men most prize and by general consent have made the standard of value—gold. So the next figure compares the sweetness of this law of the Lord to that of honey, even when dripping fresh from the comb. Thus the love of the heart for God and his law is set forth as stronger than the strongest earthly passions of men—those for most precious gold and most luscious honey. Each reader may wisely ask, Is this true of *me?*

11. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: *and* in keeping of them *there is* great reward.

"Warned" in the sense of instructed, enlightened. The re-

ward of obedience to this law is great—in a right heart; a peaceful tranquil mind; a loving spirit which brings its own reward of bliss, but which ensures also a rich and eternal reward of blessedness from the Great Father.

12. Who can understand *his* errors? cleanse thou me from secret *faults*.

13. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous *sins;* let them have not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.

The Mosaic law made a broad distinction between sins of ignorance, inadvertence, or error, on the one hand; and presumptuous sins, *i. e.*, sins with a bold heart and a high hand on the other. The former are spoken of in Lev. 4: 2, 22, 27, and Num. 15: 27; the latter in Num. 15: 30, 31, and Deut. 17: 12, 13. The parallelism renders it probable, if not certain, that in v. 12 "errors" and "secret faults" are put in the same class, not of presumptuous sins, but sins of ignorance, mistake, inadvertence. The study of the Mosaic law and of his own heart and life had impressed David with a deep sense of the great difficulty of knowing his own heart to the bottom, and of discerning the applications of the law of God in all its breadth and spirituality. Under these impressions he cries out, "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret, unnoticed, unobserved sins." He also prays not less fervently that he may be effectually restrained from presumptuous sins; that their dominion over his soul may be forever broken; and that no temptation from excited passion may ever hurry him into such sin.——"Innocent," not from "*the*" great transgression as if his eye were on some one special form far above all others in malignity; but from "great transgression," *i. e.*, from *any* considerable, grave transgression.——It thus becomes clear that David set his heart most fully and strongly against presumptuous sins, spoken of here as "great transgressions," and also that he had a deep sense of the difficulty of guarding effectually against the other class of sins, but gave himself to the effort with earnest purpose and sought help from the Lord in prayer for absolute purity, even from "secret" sins. David manifestly made much use of the law of God as well as of prayer in both these lines of moral effort toward personal and complete victory over sin.

14. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.

The Hebrew words for "be acceptable" are of constant use in the Levitical law for sacrifices and offerings acceptable to God. Obviously David's thought is upon those prescribed services and

sacrifices by means of which sinners may approach the sinless One acceptably.——In these closing words the highest aspirations of David's heart culminate. O that my words and thoughts might be such as please God! O let me be so pure from sin, so fully in the spirit of the prescribed sacrifices for sin, that he can graciously receive me as his pardoned and purified child!——Thus closes this admirable and wonderful Psalm. The poetry and beauty of the first part will fascinate many, and not unworthily; but a nobler spirit reigns in this latter portion, a grander aspiration, a high aim, more worthy of an immortal being made in the image of God and nobly laboring upward to regain the purity and perfection of moral character which are pleasing before the Great Father.

PSALM XX.

This Psalm was composed for the emergency of a pending war, of which the indications are "the day of trouble" (v. 1); that prayer for help in batttle is the strain of the whole Psalm; the offering of special sacrifices preliminary to the going forth to war (v. 3); the setting up of military banners in the name of their God (v. 5); the fact that their enemies gloried in chariots and in horses, God's people in his name alone (v. 7); and that in this conflict their enemies fell and they rose in strength and victory (v. 8). These points harmonize readily with the historic account of David's war against the combined forces of Ammon and Syria as recorded in 2 Sam. 10: 6–19 and 1 Chron. 19: 6–19. The prayerful spirit which pervaded this expedition appears even in the history: "Be of good courage and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people and for the cities of our God; and *let the Lord do that which is good in his sight*" (1 Chron. 19: 13). We may therefore suppose this Psalm to have been composed for the worship [and prayers] of the tabernacle on this momentous occasion. It should be borne in mind that these were the most powerful enemies with whom David ever came into the collision of arms.

1. The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

2. Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

This was a critical hour. The might of Ammon, savage and fierce in arms, was more than duplicated by a most formidable alliance with Syria, constituting a military crisis for the relatively small kingdom of Israel. Hence the prayer: "Let Jehovah, our covenant God, hear thee in this day of trouble; let the *name*—all the glorious perfections—all the power and wisdom of the God of Jacob, set thee on high in safety and victory; send thee help from his own abode, his sanctuary in Zion."

3. Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.

4. Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel.

"May he notice with favor thy offerings and thy sacrifices"—the first of the two terms, "offerings," including the vegetable class, and the second the animal which were offered by fire. The word for "accept" means, primarily, *to make fat*, then to account as fat and so to regard with favor. The fat was burned on the altar—vital to the acceptance of the sacrifice.——"Selah" indicates a pause, perhaps for silent prayer. Here was the appropriate place to ask that God would grant all the king's desire and help him to accomplish all his purposes.

5. We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up *our* banners: the LORD fulfill all thy petitions.

The setting up, unfurling, of military banners in the name of their God indicates the religious feeling with which they went forth to this war. "*Our* God" expressed their relation to the Most High and the ground of their confidence of success.

6. Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.

The writer and every one of the people worshiping and praying in the words of this song might say: "*I*," "I know that the Lord, the faithful God, will save his anointed king." The anointing was God's own designation of David to the throne as the man of his own heart to rule his people Israel. Hence these words of confident assurance, beautifully thrown in with these supplications. The last clause might as well have been read, "with the strength of his saving right hand"—that right hand which is so gloriously clothed with power unto salvation.

7. Some *trust* in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

The Hebrew gives but one verb for this verse—translated "remember." This should be used instead of "trust" in the first clause. Inasmuch as this remembering the name of the Lord is remembering *with prayer and praise*, and at this stage of the song with praise especially, the verse may be translated thus: "Some" (*i. e.*, our enemies) "glory in chariots and horses; but we will glory in the name of Jehovah alone," our faithful and Almighty God.

8. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.

They, glorying in their chariots and horses, are brought down and have utterly fallen: but God has given us the victory. We have risen from our former low estate and have become established in power and fame before the nations. Such historically was the result of this victory.

9. Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.

Some critics prefer to change the punctuation and construction so as to read: "Lord, save the king: hear us when we call." The traditional authority of the ancient Hebrew scholars is strongly in favor of the punctuation followed in our English version, in which case "*the* king" with the article *i. e.*, *the Great King*, is Jehovah himself, the real King over the covenant people under the theocracy. Let the Great King of the land hear us when we call on him for his saving power in this emergency! Similarly in Ps. 48: 2, "the city of the Great King;" and in Deut. 33: 5, "He was King in Jeshurun," *i. e.*, over his upright people.

PSALM XXI.

This Psalm bears somewhat close relations to the preceding one, that being mainly prayer for divine help in the emergency of a pending war; this, a joyful thanksgiving for victories achieved, coupled with expressions of assurance that other victories will follow. Probably the victory obtained over Ammon and the capture of its great city Rabbah, as recorded in the history (2 Sam. 12: 30, 31) constitute the occasion of this Psalm. Compare v. 3 with 2 Sam. 12: 30, and v. 9 here with v. 31 there. Then if we bear in mind also that the great promises given to David, recorded 2 Sam. 7, expanded also in Ps. 89, were then recent and fresh before his mind, and that he thought of these victories over Ammon and Rabbah as pledges of the same divine favor which was manifested there in those promises of the great Messiah, and a sort of guaranty that they should be fulfilled to him and to God's people in yet greater victories of truth through this most Mighty Conqueror in his far more lasting reign, we shall be in a position to understand the scope and spirit of this interesting Psalm.

1. The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

This king is David. The Hebrew word lacks the article which distinguishes it from *the* King, the great King of Ps. 20: 9. Yet the relations were close between David, the Lord's chosen and anointed king of Israel, and the Great Anointed One [Messiah], his prophetic son and his successor on an eternal throne.——The tone of this verse is that of exultant joy in the strength of the Most High who had given David a signal victory over his most formidable enemies.

2. Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips. Selah.

3. For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

The prayer which mostly fills the previous Psalm has now been answered.——"Preventest," in the ancient sense of this word—to come in *before* him, to meet him even while yet speaking, with most precious blessings.——This "crown of pure gold" may be the very one captured at Rabbah, and thenceforward worn by David. The historic record states (1 Chron. 20: 2): "David took the crown of their king from off his head and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and there were precious stones in it; and it was set upon David's head."

4. He asked life of thee, *and* thou gavest *it* him, *even* length of days forever and ever.

David had prayed for *life*, in a larger sense than merely added days—a sense which included prosperity, and especially a throne perpetuated to his posterity after him. The history shows (2 Sam. 7: 18, 19, 26, 29) that David was deeply affected with the wealth of these promises, and most of all, the *duration* of these blessings: "Thou hast spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come!" "Let the house of thy servant David be established before thee;" "With thy blessing let the house of thy servant be blessed forever." These expressions in that remarkable prayer explain the corresponding language here, "length of days forever and ever," showing that his mind is upon the perpetuation of his throne in the great Messiah.

5. His glory *is* great in thy salvation: honor and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

6. For thou hast made him most blessed forever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

"Laid upon him" in the sense of conferred, bestowed.——"Made him most blessed," is in Hebrew: Hast made him blessings forever—a fountain of blessings to others, with an eye probably to the form of the promise made to Abraham: "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed" (Gen. 22: 18).——"Exceeding glad with thy countenance," means with the manifestations of thy presence, the light of thy face, thy favor and love.

7. For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved.

These great blessings came through faith in God. Because the king *is trusting* and *has trusted* in Jehovah, therefore is his mercy so great toward his believing servant.——"Shall not be moved," the Hebrew conception of a stable throne—one not to be disturbed by hostile powers.

8. Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

9. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

10. Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

To find all his enemies; to destroy them with terrible destruction—the Almighty himself being the great agent in this result; to exterminate their race; these are the points here made, indicating most complete destruction. The history gives a similar view of this destruction (2 Sam. 12: 31).——The first clause of v. 9 should read: "Thou shalt make them as an oven of fire in the time of thy presence," *i. e.*, in the day when thou shalt meet them face to face for retribution.

11. For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, *which* they are not able *to perform.*

12. Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, *when* thou shalt make ready *thine arrows* upon thy strings against the face of them.

"They *intended* evil against thee;" but the original means more than a mental intention: they set forward their schemes; or following out the figure of the Hebrew words, they stretched abroad their nets for mischief to thee. They devised artful mischief, but were powerless, as the concise form of the Hebrew has it.——The reason is then given: "for" (not "therefore") God interposes: "Thou shalt set them backwise," *i. e.*, with their back toward their enemies.——"On thy bowstring thou wilt prepare" [thine arrows] "to their face." The arrows of the Almighty meet them in front. The word arrow, however, is not expressed, but implied. The overthrow of this enemy is ascribed in many forms to the might of Israel's God.

13. Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: *so* will we sing and praise thy power.

For all these interpositions of mercy and power, let the Lord Jehovah be exalted on high as one infinitely worthy to reign, and let us sing and give praise to him in grateful song!

PSALM XXII.

This Psalm classes itself with the sixteenth. In the interpretation of this as of that the first and main question is; "Of whom spake the prophet this; of himself, or of some other man?" The

primary question, important above all others, is whether the person speaking here, the "I" of this Psalm, is David or is Christ? ——I am well aware of another mode of putting the theory of the Psalm, viz.: that it presents an idealized picture of a pious sufferer. Adding this to the other two alternatives and assuming what all admit—that David wrote the Psalm, we may inquire: (1.) Did he *personate* himself, *i. e.*, write this of himself as his personal history and experience?——or, (2.) Did he intentionally *personate* (in the same sense of this word) not himself specially, but *all the suffering pious*, giving an ideal conception of the life-experiences of this whole class?——or, (3.) Did he write prophetically of the Messiah, his greater Son, destined, as being inspired he might know him to be, to these most peculiar sufferings of scorn and heart-trials, waxing more and more fearful unto death, yet finally resulting in glorious salvation to the race?

The first view is held largely by the German school of critics and by all of neological tendencies. The second has some able advocates; *e. g.*, Professor Alexander who says: "The subject of this Psalm is the deliverance of a righteous sufferer from his enemies, and the effect of this deliverance on others. It is so framed as to be applied without violence to any case belonging to the class described, yet so that it was fully verified only in Christ, the head and representative of the class in question. The immediate speaker in the Psalm is an ideal person, the righteous servant of Jehovah, but his words may, to a certan extent, be appropriated by any suffering believer, and by the whole suffering church, as they have been in all ages." The writer in Smith's Bible Dictionary says: "The most thoroughly idealized picture suggested by a retrospect of all the dangers of his outlaw life is that presented to us by David in Ps. 22."——That David's personal history and experiences were in such a sense present to his mind as to furnish to him largely the language and illustrations, especially in the portion descriptive of suffering, I see no occasion to deny. This admission by no means carries with it the theory that he wrote it properly concerning himself, or even of the entire body of pious sufferers.——The theory that David wrote the Psalm under inspiration and *of Christ* I accept, and maintain it on the following grounds:

1. The passages which are quoted from it by the Evangelists, and declared, or assumed to be prophecies of Christ; *e. g.*, (v. 18) "They part my garments among them and cast lots for my vesture." Of this circumstance John speaks very definitely, thus: "Then the soldiers when they had crucified Jesus took his garments and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, wove from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it but cast lots for it whose it shall be; that the scripture might be fulfilled which saith, "They parted my raiment among them and for my vesture they did cast lots." See also Luke 23: 34.——

Also v. 22. "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee"—which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (2: 11, 12) quotes to show that Jesus recognized his people as his brethren and therefore passed through suffering unto perfect salvation even as they do, and is not ashamed to call them brethren because they really are, both in view of his complete human nature and of his common sympathy with them in suffering. My argument here is that the Apostle assumes this language to be that of Christ, not of David; that if these words from the Psalm mean David, his argument is utterly null and void.

2. A second ground, somewhat less conclusive, yet having weight in connection with the preceding point and with those that follow, is the fact that the language of this Psalm is appropriated by Christ and used of himself; and is also taken up, unwittingly, we suppose, yet very suggestively, by Christ's enemies. Thus the first words of this Psalm are precisely appropriated by Jesus on the cross. (See Matt. 27: 46 and Mark 15: 34). I admit that Jesus might have taken these words from this Psalm even if David had written them of himself or of some ideal sufferer; but I maintain that he used them with far more pertinence if they were really spoken of him and for him in prophecy.——The revilings cast upon the sufferer in this Psalm are one of its most prominent features. Now it is a remarkable fact that the revilers of Jesus (by some unconscious influence, must we not say, on their hearts and lips) use these very words. Compare the words here, vs. 7, 8, with their words as in Matt. 27: 39, 42, 43, and Mark 15: 29–31 and Luke 23: 39. The fullness and minuteness with which the gospel historians quote these words of Christ's revilers indicate plainly that they regarded them as a definite fulfillment of the Psalm before us.

3. A third ground is the precision with which the very mode of Christ's death is indicated; the fact that this mode is utterly foreign to Jewish usage in capital punishment; and that such a death and even such wounds are unknown to Jewish history save in the death of Christ.——In v. 16, we read: "They pierced my hands and my feet." Years later, another prophecy said: "They shall look on me *whom they* have pierced and shall mourn." (Zech. 12: 10). As if with an eye on these prophecies, John the Revelator wrote: "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also *who pierced him.*" This most cruel mode of death by being transfixed on the cross appearing thus both in prophecy and in history shows how strongly it had impressed the minds of the sacred writers; or rather how prominently it lay before the mind of the inditing Spirit.——But this passage (v. 16) involves some critical questions. Its full consideration is therefore deferred to its place in the chapter.

4. It is at least strongly implied that these sufferings of the Great Sufferer terminated *in death*, yet none the less in ultimate victory. The indications of death are these: (*a*) In v. 15, "Thou

hast brought me into the dust of death." The Hebrew puts this in the future tense: "Thou *wilt* bring me," etc., which we can not interpret as a groundless fear, but must take as a definite prophetic anticipation. (*b*) V. 16, "They pierced my hands and my feet." Here the argument stands or falls with the construction which refers these words to crucifixion. If they have this reference, they of course assume a termination of his sufferings in death. (*c*) In v. 18, the "parting of his garments and casting lots for his vesture" certainly assume that he is slain and that his murderers, according to usage, are disposing of his garments. Be it also considered that his prayer (v. 20), "Deliver my soul from the sword," etc., does not, as applied to Jesus, militate against the idea of his death; since the writer to the Hebrews (5: 7) distinctly informs us that "after strong crying and tears to him who was able to save him from death, he was heard in respect to that thing which he feared;" but that thing was not that he might be spared from death, for beyond all question that writer knew that Jesus actually died. There, as here, death brought victory. This mighty struggle of prayer labored upon some other point than mere dying. His prayer seems to have been that he might die in such a spirit of endurance, faith, and triumph over Satan, that his death might be a perfect success—a result which is richly indicated in the closing portion of this Psalm.——As to the point of our present argument it will be readily seen that if real death is involved in the case of this sufferer, he can not be David, for David died in a good old age, after a successful forty years' reign. Nor can it be applied with any greater facility to the supposed *ideal* sufferer—the whole race of suffering good men—for such a death as is indicated here is entirely out of place in a comprehensive ideal view of their life-history. True, all the good of earth die; but only a minute fraction die by violent persecution—under such insults as these.

5. Entirely conclusive in my view to the Messianic character of this entire Psalm is the *co-relation* between the latter portion (vs. 22–31) and the former (vs. 1–21). The latter portion gives us the *results* of these sufferings. And what are they?——First, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren"—words which appear in the last verses of the longest recorded prayer of Jesus (John 17: 26): "I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it;" and are here as one of the great ends of his mission to earth. Next a thanksgiving feast in which the sufferer pays his vows after the manner of pious Israelites. This, remarkably, shades off into the great *gospel feast*, probably suggesting this current usage of Jesus and of the gospel historians; for in this case, as in that of gospel history, the "meek" [*i. e.*, the humble, the broken of heart for sin] "shall eat and be satisfied;" their mouths are filled with praise; their "hearts live forever" with that eternal life which none can give but Jesus: and then the range and scope of these blessings spread out to embrace the "wide, wide world," for "all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the

kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee." The gospel goes forth conquering and to conquer; the rightful rule of the Lord Jehovah becomes supreme over all the nations. Generation after generation down through the lapse of the ages, this supremacy endures, his kingdom an everlasting kingdom and his dominion one that has no end.——Such are the results of glorious victory and triumph to the gospel and to the kingdom of Christ over the nations which come of the sufferings through which this Great Sufferer is presented in this Psalm as passing.——Now can this sufferer be David himself and David only? Was there in his life any co-related results worthy of being put in such words as these? Not by any means. These results can be no other than those which attend the sufferings of the great Messiah. In him we see them fully developed. That his sufferings and the consequent "glory" were bound together by the strongest mutual co-relation is signified in those comprehensive words of Peter, giving the gist of Old Testament prophecy in which "the Spirit of Christ testified beforehand *the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow*" (1 Pet. 1: 11). Precisely this co-relation appears in Isaiah 53, where, "making his soul an offering for sin," but seeing the fruit of this agony to his full satisfaction and "dividing the spoil with the mighty" are the attendant results. The scope of this Psalm, co-relating such results of gospel victory with such sufferings, forbid us to see here David only or indeed *at all;* and shut us up to Christ only and alone as fulfilling this Psalm.

The caption, "Upon Aijeleth Shahar," involves critical uncertainties as usual. The main question is whether these words are to be taken as the first words of some other ode, indicating here the tune to which this should be sung; or whether their proper significance is intended to suggest in a somewhat enigmatic way the sentiment of this Psalm. The words seem to mean: "The hind of the dawn." The hind, hunted down, grievously abused, yet a model of what is innocent and harmless, may suggest this sufferer; the "dawn" may be the joyful issue of such sufferings in the breaking forth of glorious day after the darkness of midnight.——We can afford to accept this construction as on the whole more probable than any other.

1. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? *why art thou so* far from helping me, *and from* the words of my roaring?

The original makes but one question, continuing the thought thus: "Why hast thou forsaken me, being afar from my help and from the words of my plaintive cry?" The last word, "roaring," is obnoxious to unpleasant associations which may fitly be avoided. ——The words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" were uttered by Jesus under the agonies of the cross (See Matt. 27: 46 and Mark 15: 34). We must suppose that he used these words because they well expressed his thought and feeling, and

with high probability, because he recognized them as prophetic of his agony of soul in these last hours of woe. Beyond this who can go? How shall we account for that sense of being forsaken of his God? What can we say of its occasion, or of its causes, or of its elements? The inner chambers of the spirit's deep agony are always sacred; in this case, more than sacred; they are mysterious, unfathomable, having to do with the little known relations of the world's great vicarious Sufferer to the Supreme Governor of the Moral Universe in a point involving a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, the vital elements of which are among the deepest things of his moral reign.

2. O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

This represents the cry for help to be somewhat long protracted. The history of Jesus gives some intimations of this great conflict of soul, other than those which appear in Gethsemane and on Calvary. We can not know their actual duration nor the suggestive or other influences which seem to have induced them on special occasions, as when he said: "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father save me from this hour? [Nay]." But for this cause came I unto this hour (John 12: 27).

3. But thou *art* holy, *O thou* that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted and thou didst deliver them.

5. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

Thou art holy and consequently wise and good; my soul shall bow sweetly and trustfully to thy will. Admirably in harmony with the spirit of these words, Jesus closed his prayer of agony that "*if possible* the cup might pass from him," with these memorable words: "Not my will but thine be done."——The allusion to "the fathers" who had trusted God in their affliction and had been delivered, is eminently suggestive, showing the divine purpose in the permanent record of such examples—not to say also in permitting such cases to exist as examples.——"Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel," abiding in the temple amid its hallowed songs and being the supreme object of their constant worship.

6. But I *am* a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, *saying*,

8. He trusted on the LORD *that* he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

"A worm," *i. e.*, in the estimation of the people, as the strain of the passage indicates. "And no man"—not a man respected of men, the writer in this case selecting that Hebrew word for "man" * which signifies one held in honor, a man of rank. "A reproach of men," even of the lower class, of man considered as earth-born. † Even they despise me. "They shoot out the lip," literally, pout *with the lip*, to express the most sovereign contempt. ——The Hebrew word translated "trusted" [*i. e.*, "on the Lord"] means primarily to *roll*, *i. e.*, to devolve upon the Lord whatever may be your burden. It is used most expressively in this sense in Ps. 37 : 5, "Roll thy way upon Jehovah;" and in Prov. 16 : 3, "Roll thy work upon Jehovah." Peter has the same thought in his words, "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you," (1 Peter, 5 : 7). It stands here in the imperative—a fact best explained by supposing that his revilers tauntingly retort his own words: "Thou who hast so often said, Roll every burden upon Jehovah, try it in thine own time of need. God will doubtless deliver thee! God will rescue him, for he delights in him!"—all said in contemptuous irony. The men who thus reviled him were the last men in the world to believe one word of it.——As already shown, all these words were said by the scribes and Pharisees to the suffering Jesus in the very spirit which is here indicated. Unconsciously to themselves they were fulfilling prophecy, altogether unaware that "thus it was written and thus it behooved Christ to suffer" (Luke 24 : 46). Other prophecy at a later day repeated some of these very words. "Thus saith the Lord . . . to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth" (Isa. 49 : 7). "He was despised and rejected of men . . . he was despised and we esteemed him not" (Isa. 53 : 3).

9. But thou *art* he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope *when I was* upon my mother's breasts.
10. I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou *art* my God from my mother's belly.

The natural influence of such revilings must be to depress the spirits, sadden the heart, and throw the pious man back upon his God. So here: My God has had the care of me since my very birth; has all along since that hour been training me to trust in him and giving me ever fresh proofs of his loving care; and shall I despair of his love and of his help now?——Whatever may have been true in this respect of David's infancy, we know it was all strikingly true of Jesus—named and destined to his high mission while yet unborn; shielded from Herod's wrath by divine admonition; sent into Egypt and then brought back and closeted away from the envy and rage of Pharisee and priest in dark Galilee, till his work was largely done.

* אִישׁ † אָדָם

11. Be not far from me; for trouble *is* near; for *there is* none to help.

12. Many bulls have compassed me: strong *bulls* of Bashan have beset me round.

13. They gaped upon me *with* their mouths, *as* a ravening and a roaring lion.

These figures come from pastoral life—natural to David. The cattle of Bashan were reputed to be both fat and fierce. Surrounding their victims, bellowing and tearing, or like a lion devouring his prey and roaring, they were forcible images of his fierce, blood-thirsty enemies.

14. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

Here we see the sufferer faint, exhausted, agonized as if his bones were dislocated at every joint; his heart like melted wax; his strength dried and gone; his tongue parched with thirst—one of the common results of extreme suffering and very definitely fulfilled in Jesus crucified; and finally in the climax he says, "Thou wilt put me into the dust of death!" The original makes this verb future; not "thou *hast* brought," but thou *wilt*, etc., indicating at least the fear, and more naturally the definite expectation, of death as the result. These various phrases combine to give the idea of extreme nervous exhaustion. Such we know to have been the last hours of Jesus. A whole night, not only sleepless but full of earnest thought and intense emotion; the passover, the long conversations and prayer which fill five precious chapters in John's narrative (13–17); the scenes of Gethsemane, the betrayal and arrest; the preliminary examination before Ananias; the more protracted one before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrim; the hearing before Pilate; then before Herod; then again before Pilate; the decree for his crucifixion; the weary faintness which sunk under the wood of his own cross—all these things were at once the causes and the proofs of exhaustion really extreme, leaving no nervous energy to bear up against the terrible agony of crucifixion.

16. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

"Dogs" are in figure for ferocious men. But we must not find this figure in the American dog of civilized society, domesticated,

petted, cultivated; but in the Asiatic, wild and savage, a terror to men ——"Assembly" is the usual word for "congregation," the assembled people who offered their worship at God's temple, but in the case of Jesus, a people utterly apostate from God, awfully wicked, madly enraged against the meek and lovely Sufferer who had fallen into their grasp.——In the last clause the word for "pierced" has tasked the labors of critics to the utmost. It is scarcely possible to lay before the merely English reader the complicated difficulties which invest the Hebrew word. It occurs in precisely this form only once in our Hebrew Bible (viz., Isa. 38: 13); there in the sense, "as a lion." With only a slight change in the first vowel we meet it also in Num. 24: 9, and Ezek. 22: 25, in these two passages with the same sense, "as a lion." But this sense in the passage before us would be exceedingly inappropriate, unnatural, and therefore unsatisfactory, the more so because there being no verb in this last clause, we must, by the common laws of language, supply the next preceding one, thus: "As a lion they *enclose, surround*, my hands and my feet." It seems incredible that David could have meant to say this.——The case is complicated by the presence of three various readings besides the text,* creating real doubt as to the precise form of the original. Then we have the possibility, not to say probability, of unusual grammatical forms, and also of peculiar etymological forms under which the word might be a verb from the root,† which means to dig through, pierce, or bore. The Septuagint version gives the sense attached to the word at the date of its translation (more than two centuries before Christ) and this is *pierced.* In view of all the evidence in the case I concur in the conclusion reached by Feurst, the latest authority in lexicography, viz., that "it is either the construct plural participle or third person plural perfect from (כאר) in the sense of its cognate (כור), and therefore should be translated either "*piercing*" or "*they pierced* my hands and my feet." This sense being granted, the passage becomes a remarkably definite prediction of the manner of the Savior's death on the cross—a point moreover quite inappplicable to David.

17. I may tell all my bones: they look *and* stare upon me.

"I might count all my bones," probably because indicated by the pain that filled them.——"They look and stare upon me:" "*they*," not the bones, but the malicious enemies spoken of throughout the previous verses of the Psalm. The idea is that while every bone seemed to spring into vivid consciousness by its distinct sufferings, those enemies were looking and staring at him to taunt every pang!

18. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

כארו כארו כרו (כארי)* *Text.* †כור *or* כאר

This is a case of minutely definite prophecy, remarkably fulfilled. From the pen of John (19: 23, 24) we have the particulars in full. The crucifixion was performed by four Roman soldiers. According to usage the clothes of the malefactor were their perquisite. In the present case they divided all except the seamless robe into four parts, but this robe (such as the priests wore), a garment woven without seam, was so peculiar and so valuable, they said, Let it not be rent, *i. e.*, for division among us, but let the lot determine who shall have it.——Now it is safe to say that such a series of particulars could not be combined in any merely human prophecy and its fulfillment more than once in ten thousand public executions. Such cases test the genuineness of prophecy. No eye save that of God could foresee such minute yet improbable events.

19. But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

20. Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

21. Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

The "sword" is comprehensive for any instrument or method of death by violence.——"Darling" has (in Hebrew) the sense of one dearly beloved, most precious, and seems here to be applied to *life* as that which men hold dear above all else. It seems to involve the idea of the only thing one has of the kind, and is said of life as the only one men have in this world to lose.——"From the power" [Hebrew, hand] "of the dog," where the word "hand" shows that the dog thought of is human, a fellow man, but of savage, canine propensities.——"Thou hast heard me from the horns"—a mode of speech technically called a "constructio pregnans"—*i. e.*, a pregnant construction which involves more than is expressed: in this case, heard [and delivered] me from the horns of the buffalo or wild bull.

At this point the description of suffering and of prayer closes, and we have a sudden transition to joyful thanksgiving and glorious gospel blessings. The Sufferer's death opened the way to the fullest fruition of life and blessedness, not to himself alone, but to myriads of those whom he came to seek and to save.

22. I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

This verse makes two strong points toward the proof that the Psalm is thoroughly Messianic. (1.) The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews cites these as the words of Jesus recognizing his redeemed people as *brethren*, of common sympathies, common sufferings, and a human nature common in all things with his own (2: 11, 12).——(2.) The very point affirmed here, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren," expresses in briefest,

most comprehensive terms, one of the main purposes of his earthly mission, and moreover, in the very language which himself used in his remarkable prayer (John 17: 26): "I have declared unto them thy name and will declare it." That is, I have done what the Spirit of prophecy by the mouth of David indicated as the first and chief end of my earthly mission touching my redeemed brethren.——"In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee"—following in the *manner* of public praise the usages of pious Israelites in the age of David. So we should expect. How else could the sense be conveyed save by words and allusions familiar to those Hebrew readers?

23. Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

Let all the truly pious, all the friends of God and of his Son, unite with me in praising his name because he hath heard my prayer from the depth of my affliction and hath not hid his face (save for the moment, v. 1), but has borne me triumphantly through.——It may be asked, What precisely was this "cry?" What was the exigency which extorted this prayer of an anguished heart; and in what particulars were these prayers heard and answered?——These questions look down into the depths of the agonies of Gethsemane and of Calvary, and ask us to analyze the elements of that mysterious woe. I doubt if any human sagacity can do it. Men may gather up all the words that fell from the lips of the Great Sufferer, and all the allusions made to those scenes by other inspired pens (*e. g.*, those words in Heb. 5: 7, so like these: "Who when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in [reference to] that he feared"); but when all is done has our human line fathomed this suffering to the bottom? Has our search brought out all its elements? We may assign a portion of it to those significant words: "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22: 53); but even of this, how little can we know?——As bearing however on the question of the Messianic reference of this Psalm or of this part of it, it should suffice that the points made here—this most bitter agony; the extorted cry to God for help; the being heard and delivered from the specific thing he feared, and the calling therefore on all the pious to join the sufferer in exultant praise and thanksgiving; all these points have their precise correspondence in the New Testament allusions to these scenes, and go to certify the complete fulfillment of the Psalm in Jesus Christ, and in him only.

25. My praise *shall be* of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

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26. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live forever.

When the pious Israelite paid his vows and presented his thanksgivings before the great congregation, he brought animals for the sacrifice of his peace or thank offering [bullocks, calves, goats, or sheep]—these only, and these apparently because they were suitable for food, and the Mosaic law prescribed the burning of the fat, but reserved a portion of the flesh for a thanksgiving feast of which he who brought the offering partook in company with his invited friends. They rejoiced together before the Lord in mutual thanks for the blessings bestowed upon their friend. This usage appears in the verse before us. This Mosaic thanksgiving festival became the germ of the New Testament *gospel feast* to which our Lord so often compared the gospel "kingdom of heaven." Of this it is here said, "the meek shall eat and be satisfied." The "meek" in the sense of the Hebrew are the afflicted who have borne their sufferings in patient submission; the humble, the lowly of heart—the very class whom our Lord continually invites to the great gospel feast. They "shall eat and be *satisfied*"—shall find this provision all-sufficient and adapted perfectly to their wants. Then they who thus seek God shall have infinite cause to praise him. "Their heart shall live," in the highest, noblest sense of *life*, forever. Such life lacks no element of real bliss. Its blessedness shall be eternal at God's right hand! Surely this can be nothing less than the blessedness which comes through the glorious gospel of Jesus!——Thus manifestly does this thanksgiving festival bring us into the very marrow and fatness of gospel blessings.

27. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

28. For the kingdom *is* the LORD'S: and he *is* the governor among the nations.

The fullness and perfection of these blessings having been briefly set forth, it remains to indicate their *extent*. How widely shall they be enjoyed? Who and how many shall participate? The answer is definite and it is glorious! "All the ends of the world shall remember," *i. e.*, shall consider, shall think of these things, shall appreciate these blessings, and be attracted and drawn back to their Father, God, by this manifestation of his infinite love in his suffering, atoning Son. "They shall remember and shall turn unto the Lord" in true repentance, earnestly forsaking all sin and coming back to God in new obedience, gratitude, and love. "All the families of the nations shall worship before thee"—all the heathen world shall forsake their idols and return to the worship, love, and service of the true God. For, the supreme dominion of this world belongs to Jehovah by

supreme eternal right—a right which he asserts and will regain! So the spirit of prophecy declared from age to age onward till Jesus came, and then renewed the declaration with unabated emphasis. Obadiah said, "The kingdom shall be the Lord's" (v. 21). Daniel's words (7: 16) are: "There was given" [to One like the Son of Man] "dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion." Let it be remembered that according to Ps. 2: 7, 8, this dominion over the nations was transferred by covenant ["decree"] from the Father to the Son—the anointed Messiah. Consequently Jesus himself said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." His beloved disciple expressed the grand consummation in the words, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 11: 15).

29. All *they that be* fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

This language describes the extremes of society—of course including all the means—all the intermediate classes. The "fat" are not in this case, the proud and morally hardened [as sometimes], but rather the rich, the well-conditioned. Even these shall eat at the gospel feast and shall reverently worship their glorious Lord and King; and on the other hand, all the goers down into the dust—the toiling, down-crushed millions, the enslaved and most abject of the race who can not keep alive their own soul, whose very lives are not in their own but in some other's keeping; even these too shall bow before the Great King and Lord of all.

30. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the LORD for a generation.

31. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done *this*.

"A seed," a perpetuated race, families in succession from generation to generation, shall be accounted as the Lord's. They shall come promptly forward and declare *his righteousness*, his manifold mercy in this glorious gospel, to generations yet to be born, because the Lord hath accomplished—*i. e.*, fully completed and finished this gospel work. No Hebrew word appears, corresponding to the word "this" at the end of the verse; yet the sense is by no means left uncertain by this omission. "Hath accomplished" means hath absolutely finished all he had purposed and promised—hath wrought a most glorious achievement! It is even suggested with some plausibility that the very last words of the dying Jesus, "*It is finished*," had a tacit reference to the last words of this remarkably prophetic Psalm, as to which we have so many indications that it lay fresh in his mind and warmly on his heart during those scenes of his final agony.

PSALM XXIII.

This Psalm, justly admired for its exquisite beauty, its sweet simplicity, and its precious spiritual experiences, bears in every feature the impress of David's hand and no less of David's heart. Through all his early years at home amid flocks and folds, green pastures and quiet waters—familiar with every thing pertaining to the care and comfort of his charge, the young and the aged, the weak and the strong; he knew how to use this comparison with the utmost facility and pertinence to represent the like care and sympathy of his own Jehovah over himself and his fellow Israelites.——As to date, we must place this Psalm, not in the earlier but in the later years of his life, certainly after his trying experiences of danger from Saul and after his repeated deliverances. The goodness and mercy with which God had shielded him from those earlier dangers confirmed his faith in God for similar protection through all his future days. This fact with which the Psalm closes serves to date the writing of it subsequent to his earlier experiences, yet at a point when other years of probable life were yet before him.

1. The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.

It is the shepherd's business to supply the natural wants of his sheep. Are they hungry? He feeds them. Thirsty? He provides them water to drink. Weary? He gives them the time and place for rest. Are they in peril from wild beasts? He shields them with his protection. Their comfort is his constant care.——Moreover it should be borne in mind that where shepherd-life reaches its highest development, and as we might say is made a science, there comes to be a degree of mutual acquaintance, attachment, and sympathy, quite beyond what appears within the narrow range of our American experience. The brief notices of shepherd-life in the gospel history touch this point: "He calleth his own sheep by name;" "they know his voice; they know not the voice of strangers; a stranger will they not follow," etc. Let us think then of five thousand sheep under the care of one kind shepherd. He can call whom he will by name; he knows them individually and they know him; he goes before them with his call; they follow close in quick and trustful obedience. Such was shepherd-life as it stood before the mind of David, inwrought into whole years of his personal experience. With all this experience fresh in his heart, he sings, "Jehovah is my shepherd; I know his voice and he knows mine and every feature of my individual case. Under such a shepherd "I shall not want;" I can never lack any good thing. My shepherd *can* supply my need; nothing that I shall ever want can possibly be beyond his power to give. I have long known the heart of the good shepherd; and

now must I not think of my own Jehovah, the ever faithful God, as full of the tenderest sympathy and love for his trustful children?——But the idea of God as a shepherd to his people was [probably] not original with David. It appears in the recorded words of those earlier shepherds, Jacob and Moses; and we naturally assume that David had seen it there. Jacob (Gen. 48: 15) has the same Hebrew word which David uses here to give the key note to this Psalm: "The God who *fed* me," (*i. e.*, was my shepherd) all my life long unto this day; "the Angel who redeemed me from all evil, may he bless the lads" [the two sons of Joseph]. See also Gen. 49: 24.——Moses (Deut. 32: 12, "So the Lord alone did *lead* him") has the same pastoral word which David makes prominent here: "He *leadeth* me in paths of righteousness."

2. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

"Pastures of greenness;" not parched, dry and desolate on the desert, barren sand; "waters of stillness;" not the rushing winter torrent, full of peril in the rainy season of that climate; these are among the first necessities of the flock. These the good Shepherd, Jehovah, will carefully provide. Then passing suddenly from the figure to the reality; from the things which the flock need to the things which the soul of a child of God needs, he proceeds to say: He renews my spiritual strength, giving me fresh life and power in all holiness; he leadeth me in paths of uprightness according to his own name—the faithful God, the true Jehovah, and because he is such a God.——This is precisely what the true child of God most of all desires; not worldly good, not riches, not health, not fame; but an upright life and a heart evermore pleasing to God—to be what God would have him and to do in all things as the Lord alone may lead him. This leading, moreover, is the true pastoral idea—the very thing which the shepherd does permanently day after day for his trustful and ever following flock. So the Lord alone leads his obedient, believing people.

4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou *art* with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

This "valley of death-shade" need not be restricted to one's actual death-scene. The Hebrew term has a broader application, even to any scenes of great darkness, distress, trial, peril. We need not exclude those scenes which are wont to precede death, nor need we exclude many other scenes in which death is not near nor even to be seriously apprehended. Probably David had in his mind those years of peril in which, hunted by Saul and fleeing before him, his life-path lay through a valley of darkness almost like that of the grave itself. Yet even so, he says,

I will fear no evil, for though I can not see at all what is before me amid such darkness, I can still hear my Shepherd's voice: "*Thou art with me*"—only one short step before me; "thy rod and thy staff will comfort me"—I am ever within the touch of my Shepherd's crook and I can feel it guiding my steps through this darkness dense as the shadow of death. This seems to be the precise conception here—strictly pastoral, in harmony with the scope of the entire Psalm.——The Shepherd's rod is not by any means an instrument for scourging the sheep, but is the Shepherd's crook, used to guide his flock and to defend them in danger. The word "staff" is essentially equivalent.——The precious sentiment here is that in the midst of whatever danger, darkness, perplexity; though all other hopes and helpers should fail, yet God is the strength of his heart—his comfort, his joy, his sure salvation.

5. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

The first clause is specially forcible. Who shall be calm and brave enough to sit down to his table and enjoy his meal in the very presence of deadly enemies? What power is competent to spread such a table for us and make us thus calm and fearless in the face of cruel foes? David had this powerful friend in Jehovah his God. So perfect was his trust, so full his assurance that God both could and would defend him and bear him through every peril, that when God spread his table in the face of his savage enemies, he ate his bread in quietness and confidence, as if enfolded within strong and loving arms where no harm could reach him.——"Thou anointest my head with oil." The original word shows that this anointing was festive and not official; *i. e.*, such as was practiced at feasts and on joyous occasions, and not the sacred ceremony of induction into the office of High Priest or King. David would say that this table was not a dry crust, seized in haste and terror by one trembling with dread of enemies; but was a real banquet, good enough for a king, where his faithful God ["thou"] stood by to break the alabaster box of precious ointment and pour it on his head as he sat at meat! As an illustration of this usage the reader will recall the case given by Luke.(7: 37) or by Mark (14: 3).——"My cup runneth over," full to overflowing; or as the Hebrew has it more precisely, is abundance itself. So Paul assures his Philippian converts (4: 19): "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

6. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Such experiences in the past inspire these assurances in the future

"His love in time past
Forbids me to think,
He 'll leave me at last
In trouble to sink."

The same great Jehovah who had so signally befriended and succored him through all the perils of the past, might surely be trusted to stand by him with no less faithfulness and love through all future time.——The Hebrew word translated "surely" more often means *only*, *i. e.*, goodness and mercy *only*—nothing else—will follow me.——The translation would be more accurate grammatically if read: "Goodness and mercy *will* follow me all the days of my life, and I *shall* dwell in the house of the Lord forever." He does not think of coercing, forcing, the manifestations of goodness and mercy, nor should the word "will" be made emphatic. A simple future is all he aims to express.——The Hebrew rendered "forever" is simply, "for length of days—for a long time."

PSALM XXIV.

The occasion and date of this Psalm must be inferred from its contents. The historical details may be seen 2 Sam. 6; a passage which puts strongly the current idea of our Psalm—"to bring up the ark of God whose name is called by the name of The Lord of Hosts *that dwelleth between the cherubims.*"——In a Psalm composed to be sung on this occasion, it was eminently fit that God should be placed before the people, (1) in all his infinite majesty and glory; (2) in his spotless purity and holiness. The former qualities are seen best in his creatorship—in the glory of the worlds he has built and evermore sustains; while the latter, assumed to be perfect, gives the utmost force to the question, Who shall come up into the place where this Holy God dwelleth? Who may hope for his favor and blessing?——Precisely these are the points which open this Psalm and prepare for the solemn inauguration of the sacred Presence among his people in the holy hill of Zion.

1. The earth *is* the LORD'S, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
2. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

The earth is the Lord's by the sovereign right of Creatorship—the right to a thing which we intuitively recognize as resting in him that made it. This right covers the earth and all that fills it; the inhabited world and all that dwell therein. The Hebrew for "world" means the earth considered as productive and inhabited—the fitting abode of man.——In using the word "*upon* the seas,"

"*upon* the floods, our translators seem to have assumed that the Psalmist and with him the ancient Hebrews thought of the entire earth as reposing upon a base of waters. I am not aware of any satisfactory evidence that they held this opinion. The Hebrew word used here by no means demands this construction, for it equally well admits the sense of *above;* he fixed it *above* the seas; he made it firm *above* the floods. This is in harmony with the Mosaic records and with the demands of geological science. God gathered together (Gen. 1: 9, 10) the surface waters that were inundating the solid globe, elevating the land *above* those waters and making it firm in this position, saying to the waters: "Hitherto shalt thou come but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38: 11). The language of poetry should be expected to differ somewhat from the language of natural science. In the former God gathers together the waters and holds them to their place by his high command; in the latter he simply upheaves the solid crust of the earth and leaves the forces of gravitation to hold the mighty waters to their assigned bed. The proposed end is gained—a habitable earth prepared for the abode of man—a world made by its infinite Creator and forever held by him in his sovereign right as both its Maker and its Lord. Creatorship reveals and affirms his infinite dignity and glory, and asserts his claim to the grateful, adoring homage of his intelligent creatures.

3. Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place?

Assuming that this Great God who built the worlds is to take his abode upon the holy hill of Zion, the Psalmist's mind abruptly turns to the grave and solemn inquiry: "Who of all the sons of men shall ascend into this holy hill? Who shall stand before a God so glorious and so pure, in his holy place?" Familiar with the Mosaic worship at the tabernacle, David would naturally think of two classes: (1) Those who should abide in the holy hill, the priests and the Levites permanently located there; and (2) those who out of all the tribes should go up to the holy hill at their great annual festivals and other stated solemnities to worship there before the God of Israel. It was for every reason most pertinent that he should labor to impress both these classes with a sense of the holiness and purity of the Great God, and lead them to inquire solemnly, Who is worthy to ascend this holy hill and dwell in this sacred Presence?

4. He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6. This *is* the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

Forthwith he answers his own question, resting his answer on principles which are most obvious and which commend themselves to every man's conscience: The pure in heart and they only shall see God. They who would stand before the Holy One must be themselves clean of hands and pure of heart, for he abhors iniquity.——The precise sense of the phrase, "To lift up the soul unto vanity" is not very obvious, either in this English version or in the Hebrew. The same verb and preposition occur elsewhere only in the third commandment—"Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain"—literally, to take up the name to vanity. But the same verb and noun with an analogous but not identical preposition occur somewhat frequently; *e. g.*, Ps. 25: 1: "Unto thee do I lift up my soul." Also Deut. 24: 15: "At his day thou shalt give him (thy hired servant) his hire, for he is poor and *setteth his heart upon it;*" *i. e.*, lifteth up his heart to it. (See also Ps. 86: 4, and 143: 8, and Hos. 4: 8, and Prov. 19: 18.) The choice seems to lie between the general sense of bringing the soul into contact with, and the more specific one, exciting the sensibilities toward an object, lifting the heart toward it—with a preponderance of probability for the latter.——The word "vanity" is used for things vain and empty; also for things false and for idols; and is perhaps used comprehensively for sin. The man described here, therefore, is he who has not given his heart in love to any sin. He shall receive blessings—literally shall *lift up* blessings from the Lord, with a play upon the same word in the previous clause, thus: He who has *not lifted* up his soul [in love] to sin, shall *lift up* [and bear away] blessings from the Lord, "even righteousness"—favor, acceptance from the God who saves him.——This describes the character and the consequent reward of the whole class ["generation"] who heartily seek the Lord.——But we can not follow our English translation precisely in supposing the face sought to be that of *Jacob*. Both the nature of the case and the drift of the context compel us to think only of the face of God. It is better, therefore, to put the word "Jacob" in apposition with those who seek, thus: This is the generation of those who seek thy face—the real Jacob—in the same sense in which the scriptures speak of the true Israel: "They are not all Israel who are of Israel," but only they who are "Israelites indeed in whom is no guile." See Rom. 9: 6, and John 1: 47.——On an occasion like this it was specially pertinent to impress the sentiment that none could hope for the favor of the Great and Holy God save such as came before him pure in heart and hand; humbly seeking his face in the spirit of his true and sincere worshipers.

7. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

8. Who *is* this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

If, as many critics suppose, this Psalm was written to be sung

as the national procession were advancing with the ark to place it within the sacred tabernacle on the hill of Zion, then at this point they have reached the tabernacle, and now address the ancient gates, calling upon them to lift themselves up that the Glorious King may enter. [These gates were tent-curtains, not doors on hinges, opened therefore by being "lifted up."]——These doors were called "everlasting," *i. e.*, ancient, not on account of the antiquity of this particular tent which David himself had prepared ["in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it," 2 Sam. 6 : 17], but with reference to the original tent constructed long before in the wilderness, of which this was essentially a reproduction, and possibly in some of its parts the same.——The "King of glory" means simply the glorious King.——The conception, "mighty in battle," comes from the life and character of that age—a militant age and church, in long and bloody conflict with hostile nations. This glorious King had shown himself to be "mighty to save" those who went forth to battle with faith in his arm.

9. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift *them* up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

10. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory. Selah.

The repetition here is exquisitely pertinent and beautiful, this being the great central idea of the song.——It has been a favorite theory with some critics that not only this Psalm but many others were sung with responsive choirs, one party singing the question and another the answer. We know too little in regard to the musical performances of the Hebrews to affirm or deny very positively on this point. It is easy to say that in this Psalm such a mode would have been very impressive. But if this usage had been common, it is scarcely credible that there should have been no other Psalm but this adapted to the responsive method. A single case of this sort is too small a base to support so great a superstructure as the theory in question. And it is not difficult to account for the special form of this one on the ground of bold personification and rhetorical force and beauty.

PSALM XXV.

The ark being now installed in its place on Mt. Zion, the time is specially appropriate for the revival or rather the reorganization of the public worship of the sanctuary, with a much larger place assigned to sacred song than ever before. The responsibility and labor of preparing these songs for the sanctuary devolved specially upon David. Remarkably we find here a series (25–29), five in number, which, judging from their general scope as well as from several special points, seem to have been suggested by the scenes

of Ps. 24, and written under the impulse of those scenes. They are fragrant with the spirit of true worship, with longing desires to be taught of God in every right way, as a means of securing his favor; with expressions of trust; with prayers for help; with thanksgiving for mercies, and with ascriptions of honor and glory to the ever-glorious God.——This Psalm, with slight irregularities, is an acrostic; the successive verses beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This arrangement was designed probably to aid the memory.

1. Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

Taking this verse as the key-note of the Psalm, and therefore expressing comprehensively its main ideas, we shall see that it covers essentially the whole field of prayer and communion with God—the soul lifted up to him in prayerful trust for protection against enemies, in supplication for divine guidance into all truth and duty, giving moreover a large place to prayer for the pardon of sin and for constant preservation from its approaches and temptations. No language could more perfectly express the constant experience of the Christian heart. O my God, I lift up my soul continually, imploringly, trustfully, unto thee. In sorrow or in joy; in straitened or in large places; in sickness or in health; what time "all these things are against me," or what time all goes well—alike always and every-where, thou art my friend, my hope, my joy; therefore my heart looks evermore unto thee.

2. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

3. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.

The being "ashamed" or rather being put to shame, implies that his expected help from God fails him and he therefore stands confounded before his enemies as when one trusts in an arm of help that proves too weak to afford the help needed. In such a result David knew that his enemies would exult over him—an exultation that would be at once mortifying if not also disastrous to himself, and dishonorable to God. A case in point will make this clear. David went forth against Goliath of Gath (1 Sam. 17) in the presence of both armies—those of Israel and those of the "aliens," proclaiming, "I come out to meet thee in the name of the Lord of Hosts whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hands, and all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword or spear; and he will give you into our hands" (vs. 45–47). Now what if the Lord had failed him in this emergency. Such a failure however is not to be thought of so long as the youthful David is in his place prayerful and trusting, his soul lifted up to the Lord only. Therefore it is never superflous to pray, "O my God, I trust in thee; let me not be ashamed; let not mine enemies exult over me."——Not im-

probably David is giving us here the precise experiences of his soul in that eventful hour when he marched forth against the proud Philistine. Noticeably he shapes this song and prayer, not for his own use alone but for all: Let *none* that wait on thee be ashamed; but let this shame of disappointment be the lot of those and those only who are treacherously, inexcusably wicked. The verb here used comprises the several ideas of treachery, wickedness, and violence.

4. Show me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.

5. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou *art* the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

"Thy ways," in an address to God, may mean either the ways in which God himself walks, or the ways in which he would have his people walk. The course of thought in this connection favors the latter view, thus: Teach me how to walk so as to please thee. Cause me to walk *in thy truth, i. e.*, in precisely the ways which thou shalt reveal, that I may not err at all from thy precepts, for I depend on thee alone for my salvation, and I know that this dependence is wholly in vain unless I am guided in a holy life by thine unerring wisdom and by thy good Spirit.——"On thee do I wait all the day"—not through the day only as opposed to the night; not through one day in distinction from many; but constantly, all the time.

6. Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses; for they *have been* ever of old.

7. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

When we consider how utterly impossible it is that the infinite mind of God should ever forget, or ever recall to mind things for a time out of his thought, we may get some sense of that condescending accommodation to our limited capacities under which God allows us to speak to him according to our human ideas, or after the manner of men with men. In these verses the Psalmist prays God to remember one class of things, and *not* to remember certain other things. Very appropriately too, for it is simply calling the divine attention to these points and beseeching him to think of his tender mercies which he has constantly manifested through all the ages past; and next that he would *not remember* against him the sins of his youth, but blot them from his book of remembrance and fully forgive. What is prayer in any possible case but calling the attention of our Great Father to our wants, reminding him as the case may be of his promises and resting our plea on his revealed mercy and goodness—"for thy goodness' sake, O Lord?"

8. Good and upright *is* the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

9. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

Are these "sinners" godless men, in all their sins, and is this a promise that God will lead them to himself if they will seek from him such leading; or are they converted but yet imperfect, erring men whom the Lord will guide into better ways of living? The latter seems to me most probably the sense. It is manifestly the sense of the parallel clause that follows (v. 9): "The meek" *i. e.*, the humble as opposed to the proud of heart, "he will guide in ways that please him." The first construction above named yields a meaning that is most true and precious; but not for that reason necessarily *the* truth before the mind here.

10. All the paths of the LORD *are* mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

Sentiment: We may be very sure that God will teach his erring but penitent people all the ways of life that please him, for his own ways of dealing with them are wholly merciful and truthful, *i. e.*, are infinitely kind and faithful to his covenant.——The "paths of the Lord" are here his own ways of dealing with his covenant people.

11. For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it *is* great.

In the phrase, "for thy name's sake," the *nature* of God, his attributes of character, are really expressed under the word "name." The force of the plea therefore as used in prayer is that on the ground of his infinite love, pity, compassion, he would show mercy in this particular case.——Yet another ground is named for the request, "pardon mine iniquity," in the words, "*for it is great.*" *What* is great? Either *thy name*, *i. e.*, thy manifested love and faithfulness, or *my sin*. The former is the more remote antecedent, the latter the nearer one, and therefore probably the true one. Either would be a just ground of plea in this prayer. In the latter case thus: For I confess my sin before thee; I am exceedingly guilty; I can not live before thee, this sin remaining unforgiven; I beseech thee, therefore, blot out this my great sin!

12. What man *is* he that feareth the LORD? him shall he teach in the way *that* he shall choose.

13. His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.

The original is abrupt, yet expressive: "Who is this—the man fearing the Lord? Him he will teach in the way he shall choose," *i. e.*, God will teach him in the way himself shall choose for his fearing servant. This "fear" is not a servile dread, but a filial, obedient regard.——His soul shall abide in prosperity (not mere personal "ease"); "his seed"—his children

after him—"shall inherit," not the whole world, but "the *land*"—the promised Canaan. During all the ages, from Abraham to Joshua, this was a "land of promise," fraught with glowing attractions to the exiled people in Egypt and to their wandering sons and daughters in the great Arabian desert. Hence the phrase, "inherit the land," came into current use to signify all the most valued and best things of earth.

14. The secret of the LORD *is* with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant.

The word translated "secret"* means primarily a sitting together; then the persons so sitting, constituting a circle or congregation; then a group of persons in consultation, involving the natural concomitant—intimacy, friendship, free interchange of thought and sympathy. These uses of the word may be seen in Ps. 111: 1, and 64: 3, and 55: 15, and Prov. 15: 22, and Gen. 49: 6, etc. The sense here is, God is the intimate friend of those who fear him—on terms of intimacy, endearment, sympathy, counsel. The parallel clause seems to mean—his covenant is to give them knowledge, to teach them, *i. e.*, all they need to know. This explains his relation to them. It is not that of equals mutually dependent on each other, but of one mind infinitely superior to the other and therefore in covenant to impart to the inferior all needful knowledge and aid.——This sense must be preferred to that of our received version because the collocation of the Hebrew words, the Masoretic punctuation and the parallelism combine to sustain it.——The reader will notice with interest that this meaning harmonizes remarkably with the genius of the new covenant as it stands in Jer. 31: 31–34, and Heb. 8: 8–11. "I will put my laws into their mind and write them in their heart, . . . and all shall know me from the least to the greatest." The germ of this new covenant is in the passage before us. What can be more precious?

15. Mine eyes *are* ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.

Such a friend may be relied on both to perceive all our personal dangers, and to pluck our feet out from every snare. Therefore let our waiting eye be evermore toward him for such friendly aid.

16. Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I *am* desolate and afflicted.

17. The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.

18. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

As mine eye is ever toward thee, so, I pray, let thine eye turn

unto me, for I am *solitary*, lonely, with no other capable friend to relieve and aid me; and I am weak (the sense of the word rendered "afflicted"); I am powerless to relieve myself; therefore hasten thou to my relief.——It is doubly painful that a sense of sin toward God should blend itself with countless other sorrows and trials, so that with every prayer for help must be mingled a cry for pardon of sin. But such is Christian experience, the purest joy of which is evermore that our Father above is plenteous in mercy and loves to blot out the sins of his penitent, believing people.

19. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

20. O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.

In the translation "consider," our English version fails to present the beautiful correspondence which appears in the original: "Look upon mine affliction" (v. 18); "look [also] upon mine enemies:" let thine eye turn in like manner both ways—toward my sufferings, and toward the number, malignity, and cruelty of my foes.

21. Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

A consciousness of integrity and uprightness in his relations to his enemies is quite consistent with such a sense of sin toward God as is implied in his prayer for pardon (v. 18).——These words need not be pressed to imply that in his view his integrity and uprightness were to be themselves a preserving power, all-sufficient for his protection; but only that inasmuch as his life had been in the main upright, he may, without presumption, pray that God would protect and deliver him. The Psalmist's doctrine on this point is developed in Ps. 18: 20–26.——"I wait on thee;" wait at thy door; lay my case at thy feet and trust thee to hear my prayer.

22. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

Thus the Psalm closes with a prayer for all, in which all Israel may unite.——It is not important that we know what particular troubles were then pressing upon the Israel of God, whether from foreign enemies or domestic; from jealousies between the tribes or from growing prosperity. The prayer is good for every form of trouble, in every nation, for the church in all ages, because God is evermore the Refuge and Hope of his people, their Redeemer from all their troubles.

PSALM XXVI.

This Psalm sustains close relations to the two that precede, as also to the three that follow. Its key-note was struck in v. 21 of

the Psalm preceding: "Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee." The writer thinks of his relations to the wicked—how he has carefully kept aloof from their society, abhorred their principles, and diligently sought to walk in the fear of God and in the love of his name.

1. Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; *therefore* I shall not slide.

2. Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

Conscious of general integrity, he appeals to God to search and try his very heart, his deepest thoughts and purposes.——"Shall not slide," but shall have a firm footing, a sure standing, God being his strength and support continually.

3. For thy loving-kindness *is* before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

The connection of thought may be this: my upright life has been sustained by a pious heart and by a sense of thy love and faithfulness. I have sought to walk in all thy truth. A present and gracious God, my guide and refuge, has held me to my purpose of thorough integrity in all my relations, both to men and to God.

4. I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

5. I hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

To "sit with the wicked" is to be intimate in their society, in sympathy with their spirit and life. From such associations the Psalmist has kept himself. See his description of the righteous man in Ps. 1:——"Dissemblers," strictly, men of concealed purpose, who cover their designs from public view, as if conscious of being too mean and wicked to make it pleasant to be known as they are. Therefore they are constantly contriving to appear to be what they are not.

6. I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:

7. That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

8. LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth.

Obviously the question is still before his mind, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Who shall dwell in his holy place? He that hath clean hands," etc. (24: 3, 4). The ark is now located on Mt. Zion, and public worship is revived there with fresh solemni-

ties. Hence the pertinence of this song.——David seems to recall the great deliverances wrought for him since his call to the throne, up to this inauguration of the sacred ark on the hill of Zion, and is reminded of his manifold occasions for thanksgiving. Has not he loved the dwelling-place of his God, the house where his visible glory reposes above the mercy-seat between the cherubims? "Thy honor" is precisely that visible glory * called in later times the "Shechinah."

9. Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:

10. In whose hands *is* mischief, and their right hand is full of bribes.

As his heart repels all sympathy with the wicked and he keeps himself entirely aloof from their society, so he prays that he may be severed from them in their lot as God's enemies, both here and hereafter.

11. But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.

12. My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

Putting himself in the strongest contrast with them, he renews and re-asserts his purpose of personal integrity, and upon this, bases a renewed prayer for redemption and mercy, coupled with an expressed assurance of a safe standing, on an even and solid surface, in beautiful antithesis with the sliding foot to which he alludes in v. 1.

PSALM XXVII.

While the experiences recorded in this Psalm are entirely appropriate to the case of David, yet there is nothing so peculiar to him as not to express also the heart-experiences of other saints without number. We may suppose it to have been written about the time of the revival of public worship at the tabernacle after the ark was set up there as in Ps. 24; and David began to feel the importance of providing suitable songs for the service of the sanctuary. Most naturally he would draw first from the rich stores of his own personal experience, as here.

1. The LORD *is* my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD *is* the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

"My light," my luminary, my Sun, who throws light and joy

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on my path and on my heart also. As darkness is the standing symbol of calamity and consequent sorrow, and as an opaque body that should eclipse all light and beget darkness and gloom would be a word for whatever was fearful and to be deprecated, so to call God "my light" is to say, he is my perpetual joy who makes all my life-path cheerful and blessed.——"My salvation," my constant Savior, so mighty to save that I may well ask in triumph—With such a Savior, whom need I fear?

2. When the wicked, *even* mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

"Came down upon me to eat up my flesh," like cannibals, with savage ferocity. The original makes the word "they" emphatic, in the sense: It was *they*, not *I* that stumbled and fell. This was because God was his "salvation" and "the strength of his life."

3. Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this *will I be* confident.

The Hebrew usage of making nouns from their verbs enables them to say as here: Though a crowd should crowd upon or a camp should encamp against me. Of course this is in the hostile sense.——In this emergency [of war] I will still trust, *i. e.*, in God, my light and my salvation.

4. One *thing* I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

Such were David's thoughts and feelings when driven from the sanctuary by the persecutions of Saul. To be an exile from the place and the home of the glorious divine Presence was the bitterest of his trials. One thing, therefore, above all other things, his soul longed for, viz.: that he might dwell all his days in the house of the Lord. Most expressively does he put the reason of this one desire—that he might behold the loveliness of Israel's God, might witness the manifestations of his love and grace as made in his earthly temple and be there evermore to *inquire* after God and gain new light as to his character and will. Here we can see why David should be designated as "the man after God's own heart" (1 Sam. 13: 14, and Acts 13: 23), for does not God love to see the face of those who so ardently long to see him that they may learn and do all his will?——The spirit of this verse made David the "*Sweet* Psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23: 1) who could write songs of Zion out of a full and overflowing heart.

5. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pa-

vilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock.

6. And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

David's personal history during the long interval between his being anointed prospective king of Israel and the death of Saul suffices to show why protection against enemies should be made so prominent among the blessings for which he gives thanks to God.——"Pavilion" is the usual name for the booth or tent in which nomadic tribes reside—the *house* of the Arabs of the desert. In the *secrecy* of his tent he will *secrete* me (Heb.).——"Set me high upon a rock," conceives of a mountain crag, high above the reach of the missile weapons of ancient warfare.——"Sacrifices of joy" is literally of *shouting*, such as were offered with loud expressions of joyful thanksgiving. With all his ardent soul David will bless the Lord and sing his praises for these great deliverances wrought for him by the God of his salvation.

7. Hear, O LORD, *when* I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

Though he has now reached the throne, he still needs help from the same Deliverer. Former mercies only encourage him to apply afresh for new and still needed blessings. How can he ever live without God?

8. *When thou saidst*, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

Our received version gives the general sense, but fails to give its nicer shades. The order of the words in the original is: As to Thee, my heart said, Seek ye my face: thy face, Lord, will I seek. The sense I take to be that his heart says both the subsequent clauses; the first in musing recollection, turning over and over those hopeful and precious words of the Lord; the second in earnest and warm response to his kind invitation. Remembering how the Lord had said (*e. g.*, Deut. 4: 29), "Thou shalt find him if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul," and musing thoughtfully on these words, my heart responded: So will I indeed seek the Lord with all my soul!——Such is the experience of those who seek and find God. Their aching heart seizes upon some precious words of divine invitation and promise; they think of them as the words of God; and then their heart goes out in trustful, grateful response—"Thy face, Lord, will I seek."

9. Hide not thy face *far* from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

10. When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

Most appropriately this responsive resolve is followed by prayer which presents in various forms the great central wants of the soul—the divine mercy and its conscious manifestations. I seek thy face; hide it not from my sight; thrust me not away in anger, greatly as I deserve it; thou hast been my help; but I need more help still, and gather courage from past mercies to renew and perpetuate my requests. Though father and mother (representing all earthly friends) forsake me, still the Lord will *gather* me among his children, for his parental loving-kindness faileth not.——The usage of the Hebrew word which I have rendered "gather" appears Josh. 20: 4, and Judg. 19: 15, in the sense of taking into one's house or city for hospitable entertainment and protection.——Probably we need not assume that David's father and mother did in fact forsake him. On this point it is rather a supposed case.

11. Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

12. Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

Knowing well that if he would have the Lord his Deliverer, he must walk in ways that please him, and withal must really love the ways of his perfect law, he prays, "Teach me thy way.' Also, "Lead me in an even, smooth way," as opposed to a rough one in which his enemies might destroy him. He knew but too well that they sought his death, and that some of them were malicious enough to effect this by false accusation. The history (1 Sam. 22: 9) gives us the case of Doeg the Edomite, and of Shimei (2 Sam. 16: 7, 8). The known desire of Saul would raise up wicked men in abundance to gratify his revenge by wily efforts to ruin David. "Breathing out cruelty" strongly represents it as filling their wicked hearts and flowing out spontaneously as their breath. Compare Acts 9: 1.

13. *I had fainted*, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

The omission in the original of any words for the idea, "*I had fainted*," is so unusual and remarkable that some copies omit the word for "*unless*," and the rest mark it heavily with dots to call special attention to it. The full expression of the sense requires some such words: I should have sunk down in despair—should have lost all hope and heart. Probably David's eye is on those bitter years of trial which lay between his call to the throne and his being seated upon it—years during which the word of the Lord

by his prophet Samuel (1 Sam. 16: 1–13), held him to high anticipations, and at the same time involved him in critical exigencies and fierce persecutions which sometimes put his faith to the sharpest test and made him long for some resting place, exempt from such peril. All through those sharpest trials he tells us here that he still believed he should yet see the goodness of Jehovah, his faithful God, in the land of the living.

14. Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

Upon his own personal experience he rests this exhortation: Let every heart sorely tried with "hope long deferred" take courage and wait on the Lord. For his comfort and strength let him know that if he will gird his own soul with hope and courage, God will minister to his strength of faith and endurance of soul. Therefore let him wait on the Lord for the help his faith needs as well as for the ultimate realization of his hopes.

PSALM XXVIII.

The scope of this Psalm suggests its being classed with the three next preceding, all composed by David for the public worship of the sanctuary near the time of the location of the ark on Zion and the introduction of a more ample service of song. The allusion (v. 2) to "lifting up my hand toward thy holy oracle" implies the presence of the ark in its sacred tent, while the allusion (v. 8) to "his anointed" contemplates David as now on his throne. The experiences developed here though primarily those of David personally are yet appropriate to all the pious worshipers of his time, and indeed, for the most part, of all time.

1. Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, *if* thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

"My Rock," equivalent to my sure support, my Refuge and Protector. In those times the rock was thought of, not merely as a foundation to build on, or a thing immovable, but also as a military tower of defense, a lofty and secure place of safety.——"Turn not away in silence from me," without answering my prayer. The preposition before "me" seems to demand this additional idea of turning away. The verb gives the sense to be silent. If God should thus turn away from his prayer in silence, he would be like dying men, helpless and hopeless.

2. Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

Lifting up the hand, significant of lifting up the heart to God, is the attitude of prayer. May it not also be the attitude of *waiting to receive* from God the blessing sought? As examples, the reader will readily recall the case of Moses (Ex. 9: 29, 33, and 17: 11, 12); and of Solomon in his prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8: 22, 38); and of Ezra (9: 5).——"Oracle" is one of the names for the most holy place where the visible glory [the Shechinah] reposed on the cover of the ark beneath the cherubim. The Hebrew word * comes from a verb † which is used abundantly in the sense to *speak*, and hence might most naturally mean the place from which God spake to his people. This corresponds so perfectly with the historic facts respecting the inner sanctuary—the place where God spake with Moses—as to leave little room to question the origin and significance of this name. God said to Moses (Ex. 25: 22): "Thou shalt put the mercy-seat above the ark and there will I meet with thee and I will *commune* with thee from above the mercy-seat," etc. After the dedication of the sacred tent, it is recorded (Num. 7: 89) that when Moses had gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him [God], then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy-seat that was upon the ark of the testimony from between the two cherubims, etc. The same name ("oracle") was given to the same position amid the same surroundings, in the temple of Solomon (1 Kings 6: 19, 20).——Dismissing from the mind the heathenish associations of this word, it becomes a pertinent name for the location of that visible glory of God in the inner sanctuary toward which the pious Israelite was directed to look in prayer and from which in some cases even an audible response was heard from the Lord himself.——The German Lexicons [of Gesenius and Fuerst] give this word the sense of the hinder or rear part of the sacred tent or temple, which was the location of the most Holy place.

3. Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbors, but mischief *is* in their hearts.

"Draw me not away" seems to mean drag me not down with the wicked to their deserved doom; spare me from their fearful lot. Let me not be numbered with them.

4. Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

5. Because they regard not the works of the LORD: nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

The Psalmist is far indeed from pleading with God not to give

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them the lot they deserve. On the contrary while praying to be himself spared from their lot, his descriptive view of their awful wickedness impresses him with their righteous desert of a most fearful retribution; Therefore let them have their deserts!——It is well to mark carefully the reasons why they so richly deserve this doom, viz.: because when they might see God they *will not:* when they might study the works of his hand and the retributions of his providence and might by such means learn his wisdom, justice, power, and love, they will not regard these works of his—will give no thought to their moral lessons—will neither know, love, or obey the Great God! Therefore God will tear them down and not build them up—a figure which conceives of them as a house or a castle—not to be made more firm but to be overthrown.—— Paul gives the same reason for the condemnation of the godless heathen: "Because when they knew God they did not glorify him as God" (Rom. 1: 21); *i. e.*, in so far as they did know him, they withheld from him due honor and obedience; and because they might, but would not, know him more, and would not give him the honor they knew to be his due.——Isaiah has the same words (5: 12) of the wicked who give themselves up to thoughtless and thought-killing revelry, utterly reckless of God and of all his manifestations of himself in his works.——It should be carefully noted that this doom is not pronounced on beings who have in their created constitution no capacity for knowing God; nor are they condemned for not knowing an *unrevealed* God—one who has neither said or done any thing by which they might know him. On the contrary, the wicked men of our world have both the capacity and the means of knowing God their Maker and Father. Therefore "this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and yet they have loved darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." (John 3: 19). Hence the obvious and perfect justice of their doom.

6. Blessed *be* the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

7. The LORD *is* my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

This prayer heard and answered, is naturally that which next precedes—the very one then specially before the mind, viz., that God "would not draw him away with the wicked." Some precious witness of the Spirit (we may suppose) assured him that this prayer was answered, and therefore with all his soul and all his powers of song, he praises God.

8. The LORD *is* their strength, and he *is* the saving strength of his anointed.

9. Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance; feed them also, and lift them up forever.

"*Their* strength," *i. e.*, of all his trustful people.——"The saving strength," literally, "the strength of salvations of his anointed"—a strength which ensures ample salvation for his anointed king—a precious testimony which David bears for God as his own glorious Savior.——Such assurances as to God's saving strength do not supersede prayer and render it needless, but rather open the way for prayer—which the Psalm improves: "Save thy people; bless thine inheritance"—a people thine by covenant, fathers and sons through all their successive generations. "Feed them also," as a shepherd his flock, and continue to exalt them with thy blessings forever.

PSALM XXIX.

In common with Ps. 8 and 19, this Psalm shows that its author was familiar with the manifestations of God in nature, and was capable of quick and keen appreciation of their sublimity and glory. The moral application of the Psalm is exquisite. This Great God whose voice of thunder shakes the heavens and the earth, and whose majesty and power are so ineffably grand, gives his great strength to the saving of his people, and will surely bless them with all best prosperity. The more terrible he is to his foes the less his friends have to fear, for all that formidable power which strikes his foes with terror is sacred to the succor and salvation of his friends.——Its subject precludes the idea of any special *historic occasion.*

1. Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

"Give," not in the sense of impart, which is not to be thought of, but of *ascribe, attribute*, reverently acknowledging that these are qualities of the Great God.——"O ye mighty" is in the original, "Ye sons of the mighty ones"*—a word which is used in the singular for *God* in the sense of the Mighty One. But in the plural it is never used of the Supreme God, but of the angels, as in Ps. 89: 7: "For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord? Who among *the sons of the mighty* can be likened unto the Lord? The call here compares with that in Ps. 103: 20: "Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength," etc.

2. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

"Worship," bow low before the Lord. "In the beauty of holiness," is thought by some to refer to the *sacred vestments* required by the Mosaic law—holy garments; but there can be no objection to the vastly higher and more appropriate sense—in the moral

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beauty of a holy heart. This is indefinitely more in accordance with the strain of the Psalm.

3. The voice of the LORD *is* upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD *is* upon many waters.

The "waters" and the "many waters" of this verse can not be the "great sea" of the Hebrews, the Mediterranean; but must be that mass of waters supposed to be recumbent upon the firmament, gathered there (and ever after remaining) when in the process of creation God divided between the waters above and those beneath this firmament (Gen. 1: 6–7). The Lord is conceived to sit upon these superincumbent waters, and the thunder which roars in the lofty clouds of heaven is thought of as his voice above this ocean of the heavens!

4. The voice of the LORD *is* powerful; the voice of the LORD *is* full of majesty.

This voice of the Lord is no doubt thunder—here declared to be both powerful and majestic.

5. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

The voice of the Lord—his mighty thunder—rends the cedars, yea, the Lord shivers to atoms the cedars of Lebanon. "Breaketh" in the last clause translates an intensive form of the same verb which appears in the first clause—an advance in the thought which the English verb can not imitate. I have given the sense. ——The cedar represents the strongest kind of trees then known; those of Lebanon, the finest of their kind, yet none of these can withstand the might of Jehovah.

6. He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn.

"He maketh *them*," but who or what is meant by "them?" Either the cedars or the mountains on which they grow. The parallel clause gives us "Lebanon and Sirion [Hermon] and therefore favors the sense—the thunder shakes the very mountains.—— The Hebrew word used here is not supposed to mean the "unicorn" but the buffalo or wild ox, and here the young of this animal. The figure is bold and strong—the great mountains of Lebanon leaping and dancing like a calf.

7. The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.

The verb ("divideth") means to cut or cleave asunder. As to the sense here, we must choose between the phenomena of forked lightning, and the cleaving force of the electric fluid in cutting its way through any obstacle whatever. In the latter case we might translate: "The Lord cutteth or heweth his way with flames of fire." Isaiah (51: 9) has the same verb in this sense: "Art not

thou it that hath *cut* Rahab?" (Egypt); also Hosea (6:5): "I have *hewed* them by the prophets"; *i. e.*, have foretold that I would hew them. These cases of usage favor the latter construction.

8. The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.

Not upon the high mountains only, but equally upon the vast deserts do the lightnings exert their fearful power.

9. The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of *his* glory.

Sudden terror brings on parturition. These startling displays of God's glorious majesty produce this effect upon wild animals. ——"Discovereth the forests" in the sense not of finding by search but of laying bare, stripping them of leaves, limbs, and even bark.——In God's glorious temple, the universe, every thing cries aloud, *Glory! what glory!* The original verb translated "speak of" means precisely to say—or proclaim aloud; not to *speak of;* and is followed by the words spoken, as here. All created things, animate and inanimate, intelligent or unintelligent, are thought of as crying aloud, *Behold God's glory!*

10. The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King forever.

In the phrase "upon the flood," we must choose between a historic allusion to the deluge of Noah, and a poetic reference to the same assumed superincumbent ocean above the firmament which appears in v. 3. The latter must be preferred both because of the previous reference (v. 3) to this body of waters, and because the parallel clause bears us to the heavenly throne of the Almighty, thought of as only just above this celestial ocean.——"Sitteth upon the flood" alludes to sitting as a king on his throne, *i. e.*, the throne reposing above this supposed mass of waters.

11. The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

This Great God whose majesty and glory stand forth revealed in such appalling forms throughout this Psalm is the Jehovah—the faithful God of his trustful people, in covenant relation with them as their God and Friend, Almighty to save and to bless them. What have they to fear with such a God their Friend and Savior? Jonathan Edwards gives us this experience: When my heart was far from God, every thunder storm was a terror; but when I came near to him in loving trust through Jesus Christ, I used to look out with inexpressible delight upon the black thunder clouds, saying to myself, *That is my God!*

PSALM XXX.

Some critics hold that this Psalm was composed on the occasion of dedicating the royal palace of David, this being in their view affirmed in the caption which stands in the English version, "A Psalm or Song *at* the dedication of the house of David." Others suppose that the word "house" in the caption has in this case its very frequent sense, the *temple;* that David's name is here, not as the owner or occupant of the house, but the author of the Psalm, the sense being, not the house of David, but a Psalm of David, and further that the scope of the Psalm does not adapt itself to the dedication of David's own residence, but does admirably to his consecration of the ground for the temple built by Solomon and to his erection of an altar there. See 2 Sam. 24, and 1 Chron. 21, and 22: 1.——The only argument of any weight for the former view is the usage of the word "dedicate" which is applied (Deut. 20: 5) to the consecration of a private residence. But this I think is far outweighed by the fact that David's name in the caption must, according to usage, indicate his authorship of the Psalm and not his ownership of the house; and by the striking adaptation of the Psalm to the circumstances which led to the location of the temple. It will be remembered that David had sinned against God in his official order for the numbering of the people; that in consequence a pestilence was sent upon the people and seventy thousand fell within three days; that David gave himself most solemnly to penitence and prayer; that the Lord heard his cry and commanded the destroying angel to stay his hand. By his prophet he then directed David to build an altar on the very spot where the angel stood when the order came to stay his hand. That spot of hallowed associations David bought, and then built there an altar, offered sacrifices which the Lord signally answered by fire from heaven;—whereupon David accepted these facts as God's own consecration of this spot to be the site of the future temple—in a sort, a dedication of its corner-stone—and forthwith proceeded to make preparation for the temple on this very ground. "Then David said, This is the house of the Lord God and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel" (1 Chron. 22: 1).

1. I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

The slight play on the related ideas of the first two verbs is a beauty: "I will lift thee on high by my praises because thou hast lifted me up as out of a deep pit, from my perils." This second verb ["lifted me up"] suggests the drawing of water from a deep well. So God had lifted him out of the imminent perils of that fearful pestilence. David had such a sense of his own personal sin in the numbering of the people that he almost protested against the visitation of the pestilence upon the people, demanding

that it should rather fall only upon himself and his family. But God wonderfully lifted him out of those perils.——"Hast not suffered my foes to exult over me"—for throughout his whole reign, there remained some of the family or tribe of Saul who, through envy at his prosperity and sympathy with the fortunes of Saul, were ready to exult over his destruction (See 2 Sam. 16: 5–13).

2. O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

3. O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

It is at least supposable that the pestilence before which seventy thousand fell touched David's person, though not fatally. Upon his humble cry to God, healing mercy came and brought him up from the jaws of death. His words mean precisely, Thou hast spared me alive *from* those [or *out of* those] who were going down by thousands to the grave. These words become specially pertinent under the supposition that he was attacked by the great plague, but restored in answer to his prayer.

4. Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Most truly an occasion for songs of praise from all the saints. ——"At the remembrance of his holiness," with special reference to the purity and justice which were manifested in disapproving the spirit and act of David in numbering the people and in punishing him severely for that sin. David's motive in that official order was doubtless pride, national pride—a feeling which took credit to himself for the great prosperity of the nation, and withheld from God the honor due supremely to him. God in his holiness rebuked this pride, and David now calls for public thanksgiving at the remembrance of this holiness. True penitence had brought David's heart back once more into sympathy with God in his ways of holiness and justice.

5. For his anger *endureth but* a moment; in his favor *is* life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy *cometh* in the morning.

More literally we might read: "For a moment" [passes] "in his anger; then life" [comes] "in his favor: at evening, weeping lasts through the night; in the morning, a shout of joy!" So brief and transient are the moments of God's displeasure; so soon his anger passes away and his favor brings life out of the jaws of death. One night of tears; but with the morning, songs of joyful deliverance! Those three days of fearful pestilence once past seemed short compared with the long years of God's mercy toward the nation and toward David's own house. Such for the most part is human life. Health the rule; sickness the exception: com-

fort fills out the years; pain and anguish are shut into the moments: weeping sometimes all the night, and then relief and joy for the days and years that follow.——As bearing upon God's dealings with his people we may compare Isa. 54: 7–8.

6. And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.
7. LORD, by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, *and* I was troubled.

The original makes the pronoun "I" more prominent, thus: As to myself, *i. e.*, to revert now to my own personal experience; under the influence of my extraordinary prosperity I was saying, I shall never be disturbed; this prosperity will never be interrupted. These words reveal the approaches of that temptation before which David fell into the sin of numbering his people. It was the seductive influence of great prosperity. The Lord through his favor had made his mountain, *i. e.*, his throne on the hill of Zion, to stand strong. More literally, "thou hast given great stability to my mountain."——This sin was the less excusable because God had carefully forewarned his people against it. (See Deut. 8: 11–18.) "When thou hast eaten and art full, beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, and then thy heart be lifted up," etc.——But all suddenly the Lord hid his face in sore displeasure and I was *confounded* [more than merely "troubled"]; I was baffled every way, and knew not whither to turn for relief save to do as I ultimately did, look unto the same holy God whose scourging hand was on me and my people.

8. I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.
9. What profit *is there* in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?

The verbs in v. 8, "cry," "make supplication," are future, and manifestly give his feelings and purposes as to what he would do. He said within himself, I will cry to my God.——His plea with God is to be specially noticed: What would my life-blood avail if thou shouldest send me to the grave? Does the decomposed dust of the dead in their graves render praise to God? Does it bear witness before living men to thy truth? *i. e.*, If I may live I shall praise God and witness to his truth before the living, and this will avail to the glory and honor of God. But, cut down in death, my lips are dumb thenceforth as to any testimony for God in the land of the living. Essentially the same reasoning appears in Ps. 6: 5, and 88: 10–12, and Isa. 38: 18–19. See also Ps. 115: 17, etc. ——This need not be pressed to imply that the dead are unconscious or have ceased to be. It simply implies that they are removed from the scenes of earth and can send back no voice, no sign, no testimony, to the living on this earth.

10. Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

11. Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

12. To the end that *my* glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee forever.

V. 10 gives his prayer in that day of his calamity; and v. 11 his testimony that God heard propitiously.——"Put off my sackcloth"—more precisely, loosed the girdle which bound it upon me, and girded me with joy instead.——To the end that my glory, my noblest powers; or since the word "*my*" is not expressed, it may be taken in a broader sense—*all* that is noble and glorious—*glory* universally; all the glory of created beings—may sing praise to thee and never be dumb. *My* heart goes out in this service of praise. For my part, I will give thanks to my glorious God, my Redeemer and Savior, forever and ever!

PSALM XXXI.

Expressions common in David's Psalms, not to say peculiar to them, occur in this Psalm, indorsing the testimony of the caption to his authorship. We may suppose that he consigned it to the choir-leader ["chief musician"] for use in the songs of the Sanctuary, deeming it adapted for that worship. Perhaps his revising hand gave it this general adaptation by modifying its personal allusions to his own experience so that every pious Israelite might sing the whole Psalm as his own experience. If so, we have accounted for the absence of those very special historic marks which would enable us to locate the Psalm with certainty at some definite point in his recorded history.——Most of the commentators find the historic point for this Psalm in 1 Sam. 23, when David lay at Keilah or in the wilderness of Ziph, and escaped Saul's vengeance in the first instance by divine forewarning; in the second, by means of an irruption of the Philistines demanding Saul's presence elsewhere. Of this theory we can only say there is nothing in the Psalm to forbid it, nor is there any thing which altogether forbids its application to other cases of deliverance. For the sake of a more definite and life-like illustration, we may wisely assume that the Psalm describes his experience during those eventful scenes.

1. In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

No expressions are more frequent in the recorded experience of

David than these: "In thee do I put my trust; let me never be put to shame." The first describes one of the most permanent attitudes of his mind, one which appears from time to time in the narrative of his life, and nowhere in a more touching manner than after the burning of Ziklag and the abduction of the wives and children, both his own and those of his party (1 Sam. 30: 1–6). The shock was terrible. David was greatly distressed, not alone by the loss of his own wives and children and by sympathy with others in the same affliction, nor merely with the oppressive sense of personal responsibility in this emergency, but because the people in their agony of grief most unreasonably spake of stoning him. Yet here, without one strong human heart to lean upon, David, the record says, "encouraged himself in the Lord his God." "The Lord *his God*" gives us the key-note of his life. It was forever settled in his soul that Jehovah was his own God. He held this conviction in the spirit of a consciously full consecration to his honor and service, and of a strong, unshaken trust in his care and protection. With such a mutual understanding between God and himself, he might fitly say: "Let me never be put to shame." Never let it appear to my enemies that thou hast forsaken me and left me to perish. Would not they in such a case not only exult over me but reproach thee as a God not worthy to be trusted?——"Deliver me in thy righteousness" rests its plea not on the ground of David's absolute sinlessness (see v. 10), but of God's fidelity to his promise and to his covenant obligations.

2. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me.
3. For thou *art* my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
4. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou *art* my strength.

"For thy name's sake" rests on the same basis. God's name was committed to his protection by the fact that David had accepted his promises, had given himself to his service on the guaranty of the requisite protection, and therefore was entitled to feel that Jehovah's name was pledged for his deliverance. It was God who had called David to the throne of Israel—a call which indirectly involved David in these years of peril from the hand of Saul. When David accepted this call he put himself under God's special protection, and therefore in the midst of these perils he continually urges this plea: "Be thou my refuge; hear me speedily;" pull me out of the net which they are already coiling around my very feet "for thy name's sake *lead* me and guide me." These words are pregnant with the precious associations of shepherd-life. Be thou my shepherd; let me be as thy weak and lost lamb; lead me safely out from all these dangers.

5. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

These words are appropriate to any dying saint, and were used by Jesus dying (Luke 23: 46), and by the martyred Stephen (Acts 7: 59); yet we need not assume that in using them David thought of himself as dying, but rather as fully committing the whole question of life and death into the hands of his God, in the assurance that God both had redeemed him from death in other perils and would again.——In offering his prayer thus, "Lord God *of truth*," he indicated the hold he consciously had upon God's promise and veracity for his deliverance. I know thou wilt not fail me, for thou art a true and faithful God.

6. I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.

The Hebrew words for "lying vanities" are among the strongest in the language to express the ideas of emptiness, falsehood, certain failure, absolute nothingness; and are frequently applied to idol gods as objects of trust and worship. They admit, however, of being applied to every other object of trust (save God alone) chosen and relied on by wicked men. It was strong language in David's lips to say: I *hate* those who thus give their heart and trust to any thing else whatever than God; I hate their spirit; I have not the least sympathy with their heart or life, for I trust [only and wholly] in the Lord.

7. I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

8. And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

Characteristically David passes frequently in this class of Psalms from the dark shades of his experience to the bright; from the agony of solicitude and prayer, to the joy and triumph of praise for deliverance. Of the latter we have an instance here: "I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy (favor far beyond my desert); thou hast looked upon mine affliction; thou hast known the troubles of my soul"—known in the sense of a tender and appreciative regard.——"Set my foot in a large room" is a figure very common with David, and we may add, very appropriate, for his chief danger lay in being cornered and shut in by Saul's pursuing hosts. A large place and ample field for flight was his safety.

9. Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, *yea*, my soul and my belly.

10. For my life is spent with grief, and my years with

sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.

Recuring again to his bitter trials, he represents them as a long and terrible affliction—as wasting his life-power, impairing his health, poisoning the fountains of his peace and comfort, and all the more so because blended with a sense of sin ["my strength faileth because of mine iniquity"]—of which, what can we say less, than that this is but too often one of the most bitter ingredients in our cup of trial on earth—the conviction that we are far from sinless; that some things in our spirit, perhaps in our permanent character, are not pleasing to God and call for his manifested displeasure. The consciousness of God's personal favor shaded with doubt and fear, with sore burdens of trial also from other sources, press continually upon us: alas, whither shall we look for help!

11. I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbors, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.

12. I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

13. For I have heard the slander of many: fear *was* on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

Saul, the arch enemy of David during these perilous years, was in power, and moreover was intensely jealous of any and every man who manifested friendship for David. Consequently, not for any fault of his own, David became an outcast and exile from many of his former friends and neighbors. Few had the courage or the sympathy with him to be willing to appear as his friend. Hence his circumstances made him, in these respects, a sort of type of his greater Son, who, not at all for his own fault, was "despised and rejected of men."——David seemed to himself to be dropped like a dead man from the thought of the living; or, under another figure, to be like a potsherd—a broken or worthless vessel.——The phrases in v. 13 are used by Jeremiah also (20: 10, and 6: 25)—a fact easily accounted for without assuming that Jeremiah wrote this Psalm. This remarkable assumption (made by some German critics) seems utterly destitute of plausibility, and much more, of proof.

14. But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my God.

But, despite of this almost universal reproach, I [for my part] put my trust in thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art still my God though every other friend forsake me! How fitting that his heart should cleave the more closely to his God because his other friends proved so unreliable!

15. My times *are* in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.

"My times," not my life only, but all the events that make up its surroundings and determine its future. Perhaps his thought was somewhat on the time when he should reach the throne of Israel, which God had virtually pledged to him. It was his joy that his divine Lord would fix that time in his own wisdom.—— With, perhaps, a slight play on the word "hand," he prays that God's hand may be against the hand of his enemies, counter working their efforts.

16. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

17. Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, *and* let them be silent in the grave.

18. Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

Beautifully expressive are these words: "Make thy face to shine upon thy servant." When every face of human friend is turned away and never a kind look of light and joy comes from my fellowmen, then let thy face shine into this dense darkness and make my path-way bright and radiant with thy love!——Let the shame [confusion] of frustrated hopes not fall to my lot, but rather to the lot of my wicked enemies, who are thy enemies as really as mine, and mine because they are thine. Let their lying, slanderous lips be silenced!

19. *Oh* how great *is* thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

His prayer is heard and his soul is thereby deeply affected with a sense of the great goodness which God has ever in reserve, secretly stored away but ever in readiness for its fit occasion. God has often made it manifest before the world in his ways of providence toward his trustful people. In this verse the working ["wrought"], and not the trusting, are thought of as done before the sons of men: the sense being "wrought before the sons of men for them that trust in thee."

20. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

The Hebrew plays upon its words: "Thou shalt *hide* them in the *hiding-place* of thy presence; or secrete them in the secrecy of thy presence.——The word translated "pride" ["pride of man"]

occurs only here, and probably in the sense of *plots*, conspiracies, corresponding to "strife of tongues" in the parallel clause; which, however, is not the jargon of conflicting tongues, but the struggle of his combined enemies to destroy him with their slanderous accusations.

21. Blessed *be* the LORD: for he hath showed me his marvelous kindness in a strong city.

It is possible that this "strong city" may be Keilah itself, where God remarkably heard his prayer and gave him forewarning of his danger, (1 Sam. 23 : 1–13); but more probably David meant that God had given him protection and safety analogous to that of a strong city.

22. For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

The word "haste" [trepidation] has been thought to identify this passage with 1 Sam. 23 : 26, where the corresponding verb is used—"David *made haste* to get away for fear of Saul"—the haste of trepidation and great fear. This was at the point of his escape from the wilderness of Ziph, where a sudden irruption of the Philistines was God's appointed agency for the relief of David—his way of hearing David's prayer.

23. O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

24. Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

Verily the Lord who thus hears the cry of his needy, trustful children, is most worthy of their love. Let their hearts be drawn to him in grateful affection, and let all those be of good courage and strong heart who hope in the Lord, for David's rich experience ought to assure every saint, that his God, faithfully served, and earnestly sought unto, will never forsake him.

PSALM XXXII.

The caption ascribes this Psalm to David with only the additional "Maschil," *i. e., for instruction*—as said also in the body of the Psalm (v. 8); "I will instruct thee."——Both the use of the first person in this Psalm and the things said combine to show that David is giving his own experience. There is no reasonable doubt that the Psalm was occasioned by his great sin in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah which even the history recognizes as the one great sin of his life. ["David did that which was right

in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite" (1 Kings 15: 5)].——In addition to the light thrown upon this experience of his in the history (2 Sam. 11 and 12) and in Ps. 51, we have here the bitter agony, the chafing of his conscience and the dreadful unrest which filled those fearful days that lay between the sin and the confession thereof. Very appropriately these revelations are made here *for our instruction.*

1. Blessed *is he whose* transgression *is* forgiven, *whose* sin *is* covered.

2. Blessed *is* the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit *there is* no guile.

The first word here (as in Ps. 1: 1), translated in its full strength, would read, "O the blessedness of those who are forgiven of sin, covered as to their iniquity! How blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute sin," *i. e.*, account it as standing against him in law, unforgiven. But this man must be profoundly sincere in his penitence, one in whose spirit there is no deceit, no insincerity; who makes no hypocritical pretensions, but whose confessions mean all they say. David had felt the sweet relief which comes of such confession and of the resulting sense of pardon from God. Well might he exclaim, O the blessedness of this sense of pardon!

3. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

4. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

So long as he kept silence, laboring to smother his convictions and conceal his great sin, the dreadful agony was in his soul; his very bones—the firmest and least impressible part of his bodily frame—waxed old under the wasting torture, and he could only groan and sigh or moan all the day. Yes, all the day and all the night as well, the hand of God, impressing a sense of guilt, was heavy upon him. "My moisture," the juice of my life—the figure being taken from vegetable life and meaning the fresh and joyous life-power—turned to the drought of summer. From being a green, living, lovely tree, I became a dry stick. These figures from the vegetable world, applied to his body to set forth the agony of his soul, are intensely expressive. What a life was this! Who can measure the woes of a guilty conscience, heightened by a sense of that awful eye of God, impressing his purity and justice, and making the soul afraid of his wrath!——"Selah" calls for a thoughtful pause over these startling but most instructive facts of his heart-history.

5. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity

have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

The first verb ["acknowledge"] is future in tense, the best explanation of which is that it indicates how he felt and what he said within himself—thus: I said to myself, "my sin I will make known to thee; and [consequently] I no longer covered my sin. I said, I will make confession to Jehovah concerning my sin, and then thou didst forgive, etc. And thus his dreadful agony found relief. "He that confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy (Prov. 28: 13). Nor David alone. Myriads of burdened, agonized souls have found the same relief in the same way. It is the great law of salvation for sinners before a righteous and holy God. He has written his name, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity" (Ex. 34: 6, 7). But penitent confession comes before forgiveness. ——"Selah" suggests that here is another truth over which it were well to pause for deep reflection and practical self-application.

6. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

The limitation to "every one that is godly" seems to say that David was thinking specially of sins committed by the true children of God. This would naturally result from the fact that the Psalm is based on his own experience.——For such precious pardon may every godly man well pray. Let him never fail of it!——"In a time when thou mayest be found" suggests that this is limited and will not continue long. Let every convicted soul hasten to seize the moment of possible pardon—the precious time within which God may be found a hearer of such prayer and a graciously forgiving God.——In the last clause the word rendered "surely" admits of two constructions, viz.: this of our English version, and another which gives it the more usual sense of *only* and makes it qualify him who offers such acceptable prayer, thus: In the floods of great waters, unto *him only* shall they not come nigh. He alone will be accepted and spared. The location of the word at the head of the sentence favors the former; the more common usage of the word the latter.——Under either construction the figure is strong and fine. In the floods of great waters they shall not reach him. Like Noah, riding in his ark above the floods, or like one on the hill-tops whom the floods can not reach, he is safe. Those floods engulf the prayerless, but not him.

7. Thou *art* my hiding-place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

The remarkable thing here is that a sinner so lately tortured

with a sense of guilt and shrinking before the awful eye of God should now speak so sweetly of finding in this same God a hiding-place for his soul, a preserving hand against all danger and trouble, a God of ready and warm heart to gird him all about with joyous songs of deliverance! Is not this for a wonder and joy forever, that God can so freely and so fully forgive, and make the feast over the prodigal's return so luscious, the welcome so warm, the love so rich, so re-assuring, so Godlike?——"Compass me about with songs of deliverance" is singularly strong and expressive. It is not merely that his heart is full of them, but they invest him on every side; they enrobe him, they overspread him from head to foot—his glory and his covering!——Here is a fit place for one more pause to think of these wonders of God's love. Hence, "Selah."

8. I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.

David longs to make his own experience useful to others. He had promised this on condition of being himself forgiven.—— "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation, then will I teach transgressors thy ways" (Ps. 51: 12, 13). Therefore he says here, "I will instruct"—will make this song a "Maschil"—*i. e.*, for instruction. Bringing before his mind some fallen one like himself, he gives him this counsel: "I will teach thee as to the way thou shalt go"—the way of frank, sincere confession, and of humble prayer for mercy.——The last clause better thus: "I will guide; mine eye shall be upon thee." The preposition before "thee" [having the sense "*upon*"] strongly favors this construction.

9. Be ye not as the horse, *or* as the mule, *which* have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

A more precise translation will make the true sense plain. "Be ye not as the horse, as the mule, to understand nothing; to be subdued with bit and curb—their ornament—for not coming near to thee," *i. e.*, *because* they will not come near; or, else they will not come near to thee. The *coming* contemplated is not the rush of high-spirited, unbroken animals to tread you down, but coming near in gentleness and submission as the well tamed do for our service. The idea is that the fractious horse and the stubborn mule are offish, mulish, timid, and must be treated with powerful curb and bit, or you can not bring them near you. So guilty sinners are wont to be offish, fearful, distant; they can not or will not bring their souls to come near to the Great God against whom they are conscious of having grievously sinned. Therefore he is compelled to treat them to bit and curb, to chastisement and pain; else he could not bring them near him. Nothing is more common than such ways of God's discipline to bring sinners near.——It was a great misapprehension in our English transla

tors to suppose that the bit and bridle were used to keep horse and mule from coming *too near*, instead of being used to break in those timid or wayward creatures and tame them to come to you, fearless and kind. The true version gives one of the finest illustrations of God's ways in discipline, and suggests that we use the understanding God has given us to see and appreciate his love and to let it have its subduing and winning power on our otherwise stubborn and reluctant hearts.——Such is the spirit of this exhortation. It is but too often needed. Conscious guilt is shrinking and does not love to face the purity against which it has sinned. Naturally sin is maddening and often seems to rob men of their understanding, so that they need to be exhorted not to imitate the wild horse and mule in their reckless folly. The English version misses also the true sense of the Hebrew words which follow "bit and bridle," viz.: "his ornament."* This seems to suggest that the horse-tamer, while recognizing the necessity of some curbing power, contrives to make it not merely useful but ornamental, hiding whatever might be repulsive in its power under forms of beauty. So God has many ways of sweetening the bitter medicine which he finds indispensable for the moral healing of men.

10. Many sorrows *shall be* to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.

11. Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all *ye that are* upright in heart.

The persistently wicked have many—ah, how many sorrows; sorrows *in* their sinning—*after* their sinning; all through this life—all through the life to come; but he who trusts in the Lord, first penitently confessing and forsaking his sin, shall have mercy clothing, investing, adorning him all round about. This "compassing about" is the same word as in v. 7.——To call upon the righteous for joyful thanksgiving fitly closes this instructive Psalm. Why not rejoice when their cup of joy so overflows and when they have such testimony to the deep, eternal, loving-kindness of the Lord their Redeemer?

PSALM XXXIII.

This Psalm appears with no caption—no hint from the compilers or the author to indicate who the author was or what was its occasion or special design. This fact of itself suggests strongly that this Psalm was regarded by the compilers as a continuation of the one preceding, or at least as standing in very close connection with it and written by the same author. This seems to have been the method adopted by the compilers of the Psalms (obtaining in

general in Psalms 1–72)—that whenever a following Psalm continued the same general subject as the next preceding, or sustained specially close relations to it, having apparently the same author and occasion, then it opened at once with no name of author and none of the points common to the captions of the Psalms. The cases are Ps. 1 and 2; 9 and 10; 32 and 33; 42 and 43; 70 and 71; 90 and 91.——In the case now before us the reader will readily compare 32: 11, "Rejoice, ye righteous," with 33: 1, "Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous." The Hebrew reader would notice that the verb "shout for joy" (32: 11) is the same with the first word of this Psalm, translated "rejoice"—a word of strong significance and of rather rare occurrence, meaning *shout aloud*, exult with strong demonstrations—outcries of joyous acclaim. A closer study of the scope of this Psalm in its relation to the one preceding will suggest that it is essentially an expansion of the sentiment of joyous thanksgiving and of grateful adoration with which Ps. 32 closes. In other words, it gives us David's heart-experiences after the agonies of unrepentant conviction had passed away with the free and full confession of his sin and had given place to the deeply affecting sense of personal forgiveness. Then David rejoiced in God as never before. It was like the joy of the new-born soul in the outgushings of its first love, under its yet fresh sense of the greatness of that mercy which can so wonderfully forgive. Noticeably we have the same connection between the fact and the sense of pardon on the one hand, and joy in God on the other, in Ps. 51: 14, 15: "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation, and my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness. O Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy praise." The promise made in these words, this Ps. 33 fulfills. Hence there seems to be no reasonable doubt that this Psalm is by David, written in connection with Ps. 32, virtually a continuation of it, and giving the thoughts and feelings of his heart after his repentance and the consequent restoration to him of the joys of God's salvation.

1. Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: *for* praise is comely for the upright.

2. Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings.

3. Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.

The distinctive feature in the righteous as here thought of is not that they have never sinned, but that they are thoroughly penitent and graciously forgiven—enjoying therefore the blessedness of him whose transgressions are forgiven and whose iniquity is covered, and in whose spirit is no deceit (32: 1, 2). For all such, praise is indeed comely, most appropriate; and every truly penitent, forgiven soul must feel it to be so. Does it not call for "a

new song," celebrating new mercies?——Here musical instruments are first introduced in the Psalms. In the use of these, David had extraordinary skill (1 Sam. 16: 16–18); some of these were his own invention (Amos 6: 5, and 1 Chron. 23: 5). The precise construction of these various instruments is lost irrecoverably. We know that they were used as an accompaniment to the voice, and may safely presume that they were adapted for sacred music—well adapted, considering the genius and culture of the age.

4. For the word of the LORD *is* right; and all his works *are done* in truth.

5. He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

These are adequate reasons why God should be praised. His revealed *word* is in every respect right, pure, and perfect; and all his works are wrought with fidelity, faithfulness, truth. "He loveth righteousness and judgment"—a statement which might apply to his own approbation of his own infinitely perfect character, or to his estimate of the character of creatures, especially of man. The connection of thought favors the latter.——The earth is full of manifestations of his goodness. Every thing even in this world of rebellion testifies that God is good. Especially was the earth *as God first made it* full of the goodness of the Lord. He looked forth then upon the work of his hands and pronounced all "very good" (Gen. 1: 31). For all this let his name be praised.

6. By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

7. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as a heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

All these manifest and wonderful proofs of goodness in the heavens above and in the earth beneath are to be ascribed to God, for he is *their Supreme Creator*. This is the logical connection between these verses and the preceding. All you see of goodness in earth or sky; all these marvelous revealings of wisdom and beauty, of adaptation to the happiness of man and of myriads of other sentient beings, are to be ascribed directly and wholly to God their Creator; "for by the word of the Lord were the heavens made."——The word for "breath" is in Hebrew, *Spirit*, with manifest reference to Gen. 1: 2—"The spirit of God brooded upon the face of the deep"—said of the creative energy. Beyond question David had his eye on Gen. 1, and took his leading words and ideas from that original account of the creation. He writes: "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord," while Moses wrote, "God saw every thing he had made, and behold it was very good" (Gen. 1: 31). David classifies the created worlds into the *earth*, the *heavens*, and all their *host;* and so does Moses.

David locates the creative energy in the word of the Lord and in the spirit of his mouth, while Moses has it, "God *said*, let light be; and light was; and the Spirit of God *moved* upon the face of the waters." David specifies the gathering together of the waters of the sea into an heap, into storehouses, and Moses expands more fully the same fact. David seizes upon the main points and omits many of the details of the six days' work simply because his reference to the creation has a moral and not an historical purpose.

8. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

9. For he spake, and it was *done;* he commanded, and it stood fast.

Therefore let all the earth revere Jehovah. The fear expressed by the word reverence, the spirit of the loving child, such fear as begets obedience, homage, worship; and not the dread of penal inflictions—not the fear of the crushed slave—is the precise idea. ——Why should we cherish such fear? The reason given is—"for he said and it was; he commanded, and it stood." His infinite energy went forth with only a word from his mouth; it was but for him to say, "Let it be," and *it was.*——As written by David the word "*he*" is made specially emphatic; It was *he* who said those sublime words given by Moses; it was *he* who commanded and the earth stood—took its place in the vast family of God's worlds. "Said," * is the word used by Moses, and well chosen. for it is followed by the very words uttered: God said, "Let light be," etc.

10. The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

11. The counsel of the LORD standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

A God of sufficient power to create can surely rule the worlds he has made and the creatures he has formed to dwell therein. Why then should the nations [heathen] combine against him and rage in their mad infatuation (Ps. 2: 1)? The Lord can frustrate their wisest schemes. Their counsel shall not stand; God's counsel shall. Our translators, bringing in the new word "devices," failed to do justice to David in the strength of his antithesis; for David puts the "counsel" and the "thoughts" of the people over against the "counsel" and the "thoughts" of God. The former God will bring to nought; the latter shall stand forever.

12. Blessed *is* the nation whose God *is* the LORD: *and* the people *whom* he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

O how blessed the nation whose God is not made of wood or stone, gold or silver; but is the faithful Jehovah—at once the God

who built the heavens and the earth, and who is also in covenant relation with men, adopting them as his chosen people, his special inheritance. Plainly David brings together here those two grand ideas—that the God of Israel was at once the Creator of all worlds, and their own accepted Lord and King by special covenant.

13. The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

14. From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

15. He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

God's omniscience is no less perfect than his omnipotence. To this the Psalmist now specially turns. "Down from heaven the Lord *has* looked"—always has, always will; "he *beholdeth* all the sons of men"—the same word which Moses continually uses to say that God *saw* his successive works of creation, all "very good." David would suggest that God sees the hearts of men even as he saw all the material works of his hands.——"*He looketh* upon all the inhabitants of the earth" in the sense of attentively considering, carefully studying their hearts and thoughts. This is the sense of the Hebrew word.*——He is equally the Maker of all hearts—the sense being that he made them all by one creative act, rather than after the same fashion.——"He understandeth" (much stronger than merely "considereth") "all their works."

16. There is no king saved by the multitude of a host; a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

17. A horse *is* a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver *any* by his great strength.

The great number of the army; the great might of the warriors; the great strength or fleetness of the war-horse—are of no account as compared with God, much less as matched against him. These ideas were exceedingly practical to David and his people in that militant age. They have a place therefore in such a religious song as this which we can but feebly appreciate.

18. Behold, the eye of the LORD *is* upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

19. To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

"Behold;" look at this. The eye of the Lord is never turned away from his people who fear him and trust his mercy, that he should fail to see their need and give them his timely aid. The

specification of deliverance from death and famine covers in spirit all possible need.

20. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he *is* our help and our shield.

21. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

22. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

The tone of these verses is that of exhortation to his people and of prayer to God. Let us trustfully wait on the Lord, so mighty to save and so faithful to all who trust him. We will rejoice in him, for our obedient and grateful trust assures his blessing; yet let our last word be a prayer that God would still manifest his mercy according to the measure of our believing trust.

PSALM XXXIV.

At the head of this Psalm we read, "A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed." This refers to the circumstances narrated (1 Sam. 21: 10–15)—David feigning insanity before Achish, King of Gath. He is here called "Abimelech," a name common to his dynasty, as the kings of certain Egyptian dynasties were all Pharaohs, and of one Roman, all were Cæsars. I see no good reason to question the correctness of this statement. Accepted, it need not be taken as fixing the *time* of writing the Psalm but only the *occasion*, the circumstances in view of which he subsequently wrote it.——The tone of the Psalm is remarkably simple and beautiful, rich in the spirit of thanksgiving for his deliverance and of trust in God for all future need.——No thoughtful mind can read it in the light of the circumstances which occasioned it, without raising the questions: What did David think at this time of his deception before Achish? Did he justify it and regard it as the Lord's way (in such an emergency) of hearing his prayer for deliverance and of sending an angel for his rescue (vs. 4, 6, 7)? Did he apparently think it consistent with the advice here given (vs. 13, 14): "Keep thy tongue from evil and thy lips from speaking guile?" Or was this his view of it—that his course, though barely admissible, and suffered through the Lord's forbearance to pass unrebuked and even to prosper to the extent of his escape, was yet so near the bounding line between right and wrong that he felt it incumbent to warn his readers against "deceit and guile?"——It is perhaps impossible to answer all these questions with certainty. It seems clear however that David was deeply grateful for the mercy that bore him through this emergency with life, and forbore to rebuke his course

by frustrating its design; also that the fullness and strength with which he speaks of God's perfect care of those who trust him shows that those scenes suggested to him God's wealth of resources for such protection, probably *without the use of such doubtful expedients;* and finally that David did by no means aim to *recommend* his own course to others or the principle on which it rested. His caution (vs. 13, 14) seems to settle this point.——In the caption "his behavior" is literally *his understanding.* He acted as one who had lost his reason—was insane.

1. I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise *shall* continually *be* in my mouth.

2. My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear *thereof,* and be glad.

3. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

A deep sense of great mercy impresses the duty of perpetual praise. My soul exults in the Lord. I deem his protection and love my highest glory. The humble (a general description of God's children) will be deeply interested in the saving mercy shown me, and will rejoice with me.——This Psalm, like Ps. 25, is an acrostic on the Hebrew alphabet, the successive verses beginning with its successive letters—an expedient to aid the memory.

4. I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

5. They looked unto him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

6. This poor man cried and the LORD heard *him,* and saved him out of all his troubles.

Obviously David regarded his escape from Achish as an answer to his prayer. "This poor man" is no other than himself in his straits and helplessness. In v. 5 the plural "they looked" etc., is peculiar but must be understood as said of the whole class represented by the Psalmist. All who truly fear God are accustomed to look up to him for help in trouble, and then their faces *brighten up* with the hope and ultimately the realization of deliverance.

7. The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

The Lord's angel encampeth like a protecting army pitching their camp around to protect their dear ones. Probably David's thought is on the case of Jacob (Gen. 32: 1, 2) around whom the hosts of God gathered in such form as reminded Jacob of a double camp, and he gave this name to the place, "Mahanaim," double camp. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to

minister to the heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1: 12.) God has a wonderful wealth of resources for the protection of his people, not only in his control over universal providence, but in his celestial armies "who excel in strength" (Ps. 103: 20) and are never slow to do his pleasure.

8. O taste and see that the LORD *is* good: blessed *is* the man *that* trusteth in him.

"Taste"—make trial as by tasting. Commit your case to the Lord and ye will see that he is faithful and does not fail you.

9. O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for *there is* no want to them that fear him.

10. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good *thing*.

"Fear," as usual in the sense of filial reverence, not excluding the trust and love of simple piety. Whoever fears and trusts thus shall lack nothing good. The young lion despite the care of his vigilant and powerful mother may suffer hunger, but God's sons and daughters, never.

11. Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

"Ye children"—the address of a teacher to his pupils, or of an author to his readers.——"I will teach you the fear of the Lord," seems here to mean definitely, I will teach you its conditions—what fearing the Lord implies; what you must and what you must *not* do, as you would ensure God's protection. In this view of his meaning, the cautions that immediately follow have special significance as related to his own course before Achish.

12. What man *is he that* desireth life, *and* loveth *many* days, that he may see good?

13. Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

14. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

Art thou deeply anxious to preserve thine own life for the sake of its future enjoyment? Let not this anxious desire tempt thy tongue to any wrong or deception. Shun all evil; do only good; seek peace ("as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men"); and seek it not listlessly but earnestly, following hard after it and laboring by all appropriate means to secure it. These precautions will help to keep you on the safe side. Do they not hint broadly that frankness is better than deception, even in such emergencies as that which was before the writer's mind?

15. The eyes of the LORD *are* upon the righteous, and his ears *are open* unto their cry.

16. The face of the LORD *is* against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

17. *The righteous* cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

The sympathies of the righteous Lord are with his righteous and trustful children, but against the doers of evil. Under that ancient economy which so largely made retribution a present fact, it was God's policy to root out incorrigible sinners from the earth, name and memorial, for an example of warning to the ungodly.

18. The LORD *is* nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

The fact that even good men fall into sin and that the best of them have the sins of their impenitent life to repent of, make a broken heart and a contrite spirit, constituent elements of a pious man's character, and standing conditions of God's favor. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word" (Is. 66: 2). No state of mind other than this or unlike this can be right in one who has ever sinned.—— Shall we assume that in this verse David quietly suggests that he looked with a sad heart upon his deception before Achish? Perhaps this is not certain; it is at least possible.

19. Many *are* the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

20. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

No human life escapes all suffering and trial; let it suffice that the Lord knows how to deliver every righteous one from any thing whatever, that is, on the whole, a real evil, for he can make every permitted trial or pain work out the richer results of moral discipline—submission, obedience, trust.

21. Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

22. The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

In each of these verses the verb rendered "shall be desolate" means, primarily, *to be guilty;* and secondarily, *to be punished* for this guilt. All they that hate the righteous are thus held guilty and punished; but never those who reverently and humbly trust in him. The ministrations of good or ill through God's providence, will sever broadly between the righteous and the wicked. He will surely let the world know whom he approves and loves, on the one hand, and whom he can not but abhor for their wickedness, on the other.

PSALM XXXV.

This Psalm is specially correlated to Ps. 34, inasmuch as that presents God's treatment of his friends; this, his treatment of his enemies. As that was a suggestion, or we may call it an outgrowth of one prominent fact in David's personal history, so is this also—the suggestive fact being that remarkable interview between David and Saul, recorded 1 Sam. 24, in which David spared the life of his malicious enemy, using language which appears almost verbatum in the opening of this Psalm—"The Lord therefore be judge between me and thee, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thy hand" (v. 15); and Saul, under the force of truth, was compelled to say, "Thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil" (v. 17.)——The charge of malicious imprecation has been brought by some against the spirit of David as evinced in this Psalm. In answer to this charge, it may be said: (1) Let the facts of his history speak for themselves. When Saul fell into his power, once (1 Sam. 24) and again (1 Sam. 26), did David evince any malicious revenge? Utterly far from it. With a magnanimity and spirit of forgiveness almost without a parallel, he spared his life and withstood every solicitation to harm even so much as a hair of his head. And when Saul ultimately died, there was not probably a man in all Israel who bewailed his deserved doom with sincerer grief and pity, than David.——(2) David had a sense of right and wrong, a consciousness of being in the main, right, in this pending issue with Saul, and an equally clear conviction that Saul was wrong. He knew he did not anoint himself to be Israel's future king; he did not strike for the throne then filled by Saul, of his own motion. The God of Israel sent to him this call; he was therefore consciously with God in obeying it, and his conviction was perfect that Saul was wrong in seeking his life because he accepted that call and was waiting God's time of fulfilling it. To blame him for this consciousness as to himself and this conviction as to Saul, were simply absurd. It would be demanding that he should crucify his own moral nature and ignore all moral distinctions. God himself can not do this if he would, and would not if he could. And shall it be demanded that man be more tolerant to wrong or more indifferent to moral distinctions than God? David, true to his moral nature, could not love and approve wrong-doing; could not wish it to prosper; could not fail to pray that it might never prosper; indeed, that it might never escape condign punishment, save by the repentance of the guilty doer and the safe exercise of divine mercy to the penitent.——But (3) as to personal retaliation, David did the noblest thing possible for an injured man to do, *i. e.*, intrust vengeance to the Lord and leave it with him to repay. This, it seems to me, is precisely the spirit of the Psalm before us. David committed his case to the Lord his God, imploring protection against Saul, as most assuredly he had a right to do and ought to do; leaving it with God in his own wisdom and

justice to arrange the whole matter of retribution toward both Saul and all his malign enemies. Ought not every good man to rejoice that God rules with retributive justice over all evil-doers, and that he will take care of the interests of morally right-doing, sustaining them by a righteous administration of reward and punishment? To this extent reaches the spirit of David in the Psalm before us; no further.

1. Plead *my cause*, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

2. Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

3. Draw out also the spear, and stop *the way* against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I *am* thy salvation.

The tone of v. 1 is simply, Lord, take my part. I am attacked unto death; do thou come in to withstand my assailants. My case is thine; I put it over into thy hands. Go into court with me to plead for me against my persecutors: go out to battle to fight for me against my assailants.——In v. 3, "Stop the way" is probably the precise sense of the Hebrew verb, although the word for "way" is unexpressed, the original being simply *shut* or *close up* as to the meeting of my pursuers, *i. e.*, block their path, stay their coming.

4. Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

5. Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase *them*.

6. Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

Why should they seek my life and plot my ruin? I deserve it not at their hand. The Lord sent Samuel to anoint my head; the Lord felled Goliath of Gath under my hand. Shall Saul slay me for these things? The Lord be my Judge and Deliverer!——God's angels are sent not only to encamp around the righteous but to chase away the wicked. In v. 5, the word for "chase" is literally *urging*, *pushing* them on, as a mighty wind does the chaff.——"Persecute," not in a wrong, malicious sense, but in that of *following after* to execute God's righteous will upon the guilty. A terrible doom is this, driven back from their malicious assaults upon the good, along a way dark and intensely slippery [Heb., double slipperinesses], and God's angel of retribution crowding hard upon their steps!

7. For without cause have they hid for me their net *in* a pit, *which* without cause they have digged for my soul.

The reasons thereof follow: "*for*" all their malicious plots against me are *causeless;* on my part unmerited.——A pit dug with a net spread over it seems to be the precise idea—a net-pit, for his life.

8. Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

Let destruction come upon him ere he knows it [Heb.]. Also in the last clause, "with ruin let him fall into it," *i. e.*, let it be a fatal fall.

9. And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.

10. All my bones shall say, LORD, who *is* like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

David was no doubt somewhat sensitive to his own well-being; every sentient creature is so by nature; but this is not all, for the interests treasured up in his life were more than his personal happiness, even the interests of piety and prosperity for Israel. It should not be forgotten that David's sufferings from the hand of Saul came wholly from the fact that God had called him to the throne for the good of Israel, and therefore had treasured up in David's life and success all those sacred interests. Let David rejoice therefore when God saves him from his enemies, and not for his own sake only but for Zion's sake also. It is to the glory of the Infinite Father that he cares for and preserves the defenseless and suffering ones in his family against their mightier foes. Well might David say, All my bones chime into the grand choral song of praise for such parental care and love!

11. False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge *things* that I knew not.

12. They rewarded me evil for good *to* the spoiling of my soul.

Witnesses of violent, murderous intent, is better than simply "false." They challenge me to answer to charges of which I know nothing.——The word for "spoiling" is strong—the bereavement of my soul, the stripping me of all things most dear, like the death of best friends, and especially that bereavement which leaves us widowed and childless.

13. But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing *was* sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

14. I behaved myself as though *he had been* my friend *or* brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth *for his* mother.

David paints his own feeling and bearing toward his persecutors in the strongest contrast with theirs toward him, and so far as the history throws light on the case, with entire truth.——"Humbled my soul with fasting" is the usual phrase with the Hebrew writers. The verb however has the sense of *afflict* rather than precisely humble, referring to the self-imposed suffering and discomfort of abstinence from food.——The last clause of v. 13 is precisely, My prayer shall [or let my prayer] return into mine own bosom; let the good I have sought for them, since they requite it only with hate and wrong, come back in blessings upon mine own soul.——Observe the appropriate gradation from remoter friends to dearest, "friend," "brother," "mother."

15. But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: *yea*, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew *it* not; they did tear *me*, and ceased not:

16. With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

While the general scope of these verses is clear, some of the particular words and clauses are explained by critics variously. "Adversity" is a halting or stumbling, over which his enemies exulted. The word for "abjects" is put by Maurer, fools; by Alexander, cripples; by Gesenius, biters, in the sense of backbiters, *i. e.*, slanderers, which last seems to be favored by the next clause, "and I knew it not," *i. e.*, they slanderously charged against me things of which I knew nothing.——"They did *tear* me," *i. e.*, with the teeth of slander, in the same sense as our word *backbite*.——As buffoons and jesters are employed at some festive tables to make sport for the guests, so David's enemies employed slanderers on similar occasions to regale the party at his expense. This seems to be the best explanation of v. 16.——The word "hypocritical" misses the true idea which sets forth rather their intense meanness and wickedness.——Some critics suppose the allusion to "feasts," to signify that these slanderers did their service *for bread*, *i. e.*, for pay, a livelihood; others, that it alludes to a usage common in their festivities—the latter with most probability.

17. Lord, how long wilt thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.

18. I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.

How long, Lord, wilt thou look on these things *quietly*, with no indignant protest and resistance?——For "my darling," see Ps. 22: 20, the sense being, my precious life and all that is most dear.——For such deliverances as I now implore, I will praise thee before all the people.

19. Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully re-

joice over me: *neither* let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.

20. For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against *them that are* quiet in the land.

21. Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, *and* said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen *it*.

"Wink with the eye"—malicious and scornful. They really seek no one's good, but devise mischief against the most inoffensive.——"Our eye hath seen *it*," *i. e.*, our heart's desire.

22. *This* thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

23. Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

While they say, "Our eye hath seen," I know, O Lord, that *thou* hast seen: now, therefore, keep silence no longer. Awake to my judgment, *i. e.*, to vindicate my cause.

24. Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

25. Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

26. Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonor that magnify *themselves* against me.

In the last clause "magnify themselves against me," probably means, acting proudly and scornfully toward me. Then the antithetic use of the same words with reference to God in v. 27 might mean, Let the Lord achieve real glory by my deliverance.

27. Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favor my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

28. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness *and* of thy praise all the day long.

Let all those have occasion to rejoice whose sympathies are with me and with righteousness.——"All the day long" is not to be restricted to one day's joyful thanksgiving, but means, through whole days, perpetually.

PSALM XXXVI.

The particular occasion of this Psalm is not indicated. The strain of it suggests however that it was some striking manifesta-

tion of human depravity and of its amazing power over wicked hearts. Having spoken of this in vs. 1–4, he then places in telling contrast the opposite qualities in the character of the great God—his mercy, faithfulness, loving-kindness, and his marvelously tender care of his trustful children.——The Psalm is attributed to David with the rather unusual remark additional—"The servant of the Lord," as if to suggest that in these words respecting the horrible depravity of man on the one hand, and the wonderful goodness and grace of God on the other, he thought and spake as a true servant of God, fully in his sympathy and friendship.

1. The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is* no fear of God before his eyes.

All the critics feel the difficulties of this verse. The Hebrew word answering to "saith" is not a verb, but a noun, meaning properly *an oracle*—an utterance either from God himself, or from one supposed to be under special inspiration. It is used six times of Balaam (Num. 24: 3, 4, 15, 16) within four verses, and by David twice of himself as moved to sacred song (2 Sam. 23: 1). It is almost distinctively *the* word by which the prophetic declarations of God are indicated and is commonly translated, "Thus *saith* the Lord." In accordance with this usage we have here the sentiment, *Depravity is the sinner's oracle.* Its impulses have to him an authority potent as the voice of God, or at least, as those oracular responses which are supposed to come from superhuman sources and which command the reverence, the homage and the obedience of mankind.——The word for "transgression" I translate depravity, in the sense of the passions, the impulses of sin in a depraved soul.——Rather than "of the wicked," the Hebrew requires the construction, *as to the wicked*, or *to* the wicked. The love and the passion for sinning have the force of an oracle *to* the wicked man.——The word "my" in the clause "within my heart" seems very unnatural. The obvious sense of the words is—I think so; it seems so to me; but such a statement seems uncalled for. I therefore incline strongly to accept the various reading which makes it—"in *his* heart." Then the whole passage becomes not only natural and easy, but forcible. Depravity is an oracle to the wicked man in his heart; there is no fear of God before his eyes. He fears, reverences, and obeys those voices from within his heart which prompt him to sin—which call him on to more and deeper wickedness; but the fear of God has no such power over his soul.

2. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

Here is one reason why he fears not God, but gives heed to the impulses of his depravity. He flatters himself—not "until," but *in reference to* the finding out of his iniquity and the hating of it. Now since the fear of God is the thing denied of him, the thought

here must be that he flatters himself God will not find out his iniquity to hate and therefore punish it. The word "until" is by no means a correct and adequate rendering of the original preposition. Under the right construction, the verse gives with surpassing accuracy the philosophy of sinning, viz.: men flatter themselves that God will never search out, find, hate, and therefore punish their sin.

3. The words of his mouth *are* iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, *and* to do good.

4. He deviseth mischief upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way *that is* not good; he abhorreth not evil.

He stands aloof from being wise and doing right.——"Upon his bed," where one's thoughts come welling up from the heart, least of all affected by external surroundings, there he is concocting schemes of sinning. He plants himself habitually in ways that are not good, but bad, and has no repugnance to evil—*i. e.*, he really loves it. A dark picture, but not more dark than truthful.

5. Thy mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens; *and* thy faithfulness *reacheth* unto the clouds.

6. Thy righteousness *is* like the great mountains; thy judgments *are* a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

The beauty of this Psalm lies in this expressive contrast which places the glorious excellencies of Israel's God over against the ineffable wickedness and guilt of sinners who throw a loose rein upon their depraved impulses.——The sense is not that God's mercy is exercised *in* the heavens in distinction from the earth—rather there than here; but as the parallelism demands, it towers high, up to heaven; it is great and glorious, high as heaven, vast as the universe! So of God's "righteousness" and of his "judgments;" the strongest expressions are used to indicate their richness, depth, and unutterable glory.——"Thou preservest," etc., is literally, thou savest, or more closely, thou *wilt save* man and beast, prolonging their lives; supplying every natural want; pouring out blessings upon them from thy full hand and thus perpetually evincing thy glorious benevolence.——The future tense expresses not only the present fact but the writer's assurance that it will be so through all the future.

7. How excellent *is* thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

Such loving-kindness is a most ample basis for perfect trust. The sons of men *will put* (future tense); they *will*, for they will have most abundant reason for it through all the ages.——"Under the shadow of thy wings" takes its figure from the mother

bird whose wings are the natural shelter for her young. So she draws the little ones close to her warm bosom and spreads over them her sheltering wings. Our divine Lord reproduces this figure as to even the city of his murderers—"How often would I have gathered thy children as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings" (Luke 13: 34).

8. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

9. For with thee *is* the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

So the Great Father lavishes good upon his creatures and especially upon his trustful children. These precious words have their really full significance and application only in the line of the *spiritual blessings* which God gives both surely and abundantly to those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. All such shall be satisfied with the fatness of his house. The family home where they dwell under his shadow and sit around his table never lacks a royal feast of fat things—a river of God's pleasures never dry—a fountain of life-power and life-joy.

10. O continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

Yet such is the wise and admirable plan of God that prayer has its place between the promise and the bestowment. "Ask, and ye shall receive" is evermore the law of God's spiritual house. So here: "Continue," *i. e.*, prolong, perpetuate thy loving-kindness to thy people. Let it never fail. As thou hast said, so let it be!

11. Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

12. There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.

Let not the foot of pride come down upon me, scornfully trampling me under foot; let not the hand of the wicked make me a wanderer; break me up from my quiet home, and drive me away an outcast.——In the last verse the emphatic form of the word *there* is well put by Dr. Alexander: "*There* has very much the same sense as in common parlance when uttered as a sudden exclamation: *There!* they have fallen [already]!" At the moment of his prayer, a sense of assured confidence comes over his soul; he sees his prayer answered; his enemies already prostrate and his fears vanished away!

PSALM XXXVII.

The scope of this Psalm relieves us of all inquiry after a special occasion or special circumstances for its composition, inasmuch as its views of men are general rather than special. The writer looks at many cases under each class—the righteous and the wicked, and not exclusively at any particular one. It is a Psalm of generalizations and not of specific allusions. David had seen more than one case of a wicked man, prosperous for a short time, but for a short time only. Nabal crossed his path early, and manifestly made a deep impression on his mind (1 Sam. 25).——The central thought of the Psalm is, Let not good men, however much afflicted, envy the prosperous wicked, for their prosperity is transient. God is against them. God will surely protect and bless the righteous, and will speedily cut off the wicked.——The age when David observed these facts of human life was largely one of *present* retribution on both good men and bad, the wicked not living out half their days; the righteous blessed ordinarily with length of days and manifold prosperity. It was a wise arrangement of God's providence to give these present manifestations of his moral government over men in those early ages, as a means of confirming their faith in the fact that a righteous God reigns over this sinning world. It would not have been well to ask men to believe in future retribution until he had given them in this world some demonstrations of his righteous justice. Hence the greater amount of present retribution in the early ages of our world than in these later ages. These facts both certify the correctness of the doctrine of this Psalm and show its forcible moral bearings upon the certainty of retribution in eternity to fill out the unfinished retributions of time.

1. Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

2. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

"Fret not;" [Hebrew] be not excited, *heated;* let not your heart wax hot as you think of the prosperity of evil doers. For their glory soon passes away, even as the cut grass and the green herb of summer are soon dry—for the fires of the oven. This is one among many reasons against fretfulness and envy in view of the prosperity of the wicked, yet alone it is all sufficient. Their prosperity is too short to be rationally envied. If you see their whole case you can not be so foolish as to wish it were your own.

3. Trust in the LORD, and do good; *so* shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed.

All these verbs are in form imperative: "trust; do good; dwell in the land; feed on truth." But according to the usual Hebrew

idiom, the last two are legitimately *promise*, as in our English version.——"Do good," in the broad sense of doing right in all respects.——"Dwell in the land," *i. e.*, of promise, Canaan, long the cherished desire of the children of Abraham.——Not "shalt be fed," for the verb is not passive but transitive, and the object after it is expressed, viz., *truth*—God's faithful promises. On these let thy soul feed in quiet, patient hope. Consequently the primary sense here is not of earthly bread but of the bread of heaven. The earthly is not expressed yet may be implied. The greater includes the less.

4. Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

"Delight thyself;" be happy in God; let it suffice thee that thou hast such a friend. Enjoy his friendship; do him the honor of manifesting your confidence in him, your affection for him, your full and abundant satisfaction in having one rich and noble friend, so wise, so kind, so good that you are forever blest in his love and friendship.——The friends of God sometimes need this admonition. Alas, that they should so often dishonor their great Father by not really delighting themselves in his friendship, and in the glorious qualities of his character.——There is a promise to those who obey this word: "He will give thee the desires of thy heart." Joyfully trust him; then will he joyfully bless thee. Make your soul happy in loving and obeying him; he will not crush out that joy, but will rejoice to fulfill the large desires of your heart.

5. Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring *it* to pass.

6. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

The word for "commit" means primarily to *roll*. Roll thy way upon the Lord; devolve upon him the burdens of life, yet in the sense not of laying off all personal responsibility, but of throwing yourself in your weakness upon his strong arm for your needed strength. The same word occurs in the same sense in Ps. 22: 8, said there of the Messiah: He *rolled himself* upon the Lord to be delivered. Also, Prov. 16: 3: "Roll thy work upon the Lord"—for the help you need to do it both easily and well. A different verb with the same sense appears in Ps. 55: 22: "Cast thy burden on the Lord;" literally, cast upon the Lord what he gives thee to bear, etc. Peter (1 Eps. 5: 17) has the same precious thought: "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you."——"Thy way" might of itself naturally take the sense: thy general course of life considered as shaped, determined, by the agencies of divine providence. But the whole current of the parallel passages favors the sense: thy way of duty—the things that devolve upon thee to do. The last clause of v. 5 favors this sense: The Lord will accomplish, will

aid you to do that thing first expressed under the word "way." V. 6 means, He will vindicate thy reputation before the world—a thought specially dear to David whom his enemies, particularly Saul, maligned and traduced grievously.

7. Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

8. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

"Rest," the original word suggesting a calm, quiet trust, since its primary sense is *to be silent.* Yet the next verb, translated "wait patiently," suggests an earnest mind toward God. (See Ps. 40: 1, and notes there). If the wicked seem to prosper, leave their case with God and keep your spirit calm and cool.——The clause (v. 8), "Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil," should read, "Fret not thyself—only to the doing of evil;" *i. e.*, fretting tends only to evil-doing; can have no other result save to ensnare thee into sin.

9. For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

10. For yet a little while, and the wicked *shall* not *be:* yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it *shall* not *be.*

11. But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

The contrasted ideas are—on the one hand, evil-doers shall soon be cut off by death; on the other, the righteous shall dwell long on the land of God's promise.——The word "earth" means *the land, i. e.*, of Canaan. "They shall inherit the land" came into common use during the long years of their waiting in faith for the promised land, while the patriarchs were strangers in it or exiled from it in Egypt or the wilderness of Arabia.——The "meek"—the same who (in v. 9) "wait on the Lord,"—are the humble and unaspiring whose souls are really contrite and lowly before God. ——Our Lord in his sermon (Matt. 5: 5) quotes this very language: "The meek shall inherit the land"—children of promise.

12. The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

13. The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.

"Gnasheth"—expressing strongly his malign, revengeful spirit. ——"The Lord shall laugh at him," as said in Ps. 2: 4, suggesting God's infinite contempt for his puny endeavors, and his consciousness of boundless resources for the sinner's punishment and

destruction. The reason assigned here looks to this—"for he seeth that his day is coming"—the day of swift retribution upon the guilty.

14. The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, *and* to slay such as be of upright conversation.

15. Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

"Those of upright conversation" is in Hebrew simply, "the upright of way," *i. e.*, of life generally. This sense of the word "conversation" is now obsolete. Anciently, like the Latin word from which it comes, it meant one's way of life. It is now restricted to the intercommuication of thought in speech.——The violence they plot against the righteous recoils upon themselves to their ruin. See the case of Haman in the story of Esther.

16. A little that a righteous man hath *is* better than the riches of many wicked.

17. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

The word for "riches" suggests the tumult, commotion, and unrest that are associated with the wealth of the wicked.——"Arms" in the literal sense, but implying their power of useful labor.

18. The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be forever.

19. They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

The Lord is always cognizant of the days of the upright. Their whole life, every moment of it, is under his watchful and perfect eye. He will make their inheritance of blessings permanent, meaning primarily, they shall dwell in his land of promise all their days.——"Be ashamed," here, as usual, in the sense of being *put to shame* by disappointment of their hope, the failure of that on which they rely. When all the land suffers in famine, they shall have enough.

20. But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD *shall be* as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

In the clause, "the fat of lambs," the modern lexicons concur in the sense, *The glory of the pastures*, according to the figure in v. 2. The word rendered "fat" * means preciousness, that which is most precious, which may possibly be used of the most precious part of lambs. The word for lamb has this sense usually, but

may bear the sense of pasture, as in Isaiah 30: 23. and l's. 65: 14. The strong reason for the construction of our English version is that the burning of lambs, as in sacrifice, seems to be the figure before the mind as shown in the context. The other construction supposes a change of figure. In either construction the sense is substantially the same, the fearful destruction of the wicked.

21. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth.

22. For *such as be* blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and *they that be* cursed of him shall be cut off.

"The borrower is servant to the lender" (Prov. 22: 7). It was a feature in the prosperity of an obedient people as it stands in the words of Moses, that they should be lenders, not borrowers. "Thou shalt lend to many nations, but thou shalt not borrow" (Deut. 15: 6, and 28: 12). Hence the strain of these verses is primarily of ability, rather than moral honesty. The wicked are needy, dependent; live by borrowing. The righteous have the means to give and the heart also. "For" (assigning the reason) those whom God blesses hold the land and abide in prosperity; but the accursed of God are soon cut off in death; perhaps thrust out of the communion and excluded from the blessings of the covenant people.——Moreover it is implied that the wicked deserve this doom for their dishonesty.

23. The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

24. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth *him with* his hand.

God's providence reaches every minutest thing. Every several step, each setting down of the foot, is shaped and determined of God in the case of the good man. God feels a personal interest in the way he shall go. If he chance to fall, it is not serious; is never an utter prostration, for God never remits his care; never lets go his upholding hand.

25. I have been young, and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread

Literally, "I have been young; also have been old," and therefore have had long years of observation; but I have never seen the righteous forsaken of God. He makes all things work together for good to those who love and trust him. His posterity also are blessed and never brought to beg their bread. In those ages preeminently, God manifested his favor to his people by means of earthly and present good.

26. *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed *is* blessed.

27. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

28. For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved forever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

29. The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein forever.

The staple thoughts of the Psalm are reiterated.

30. The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

31. The law of his God *is* in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

From the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks, so that you may know the good man who fear and loves God by the free utterance of his most cherished thoughts. God will uphold such a man so that none of his steps shall slide as if on an unstable foundation.

32. The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

33. The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

34. Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see *it*.

David wrote these words from his own experience as well as from a large field of personal observation. Saul had long watched him to slay him; he had lived to see Saul's mournful death, and himself exalted to the highest place over the Lord's land and people.

35. I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

36. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he *was* not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

He seems to speak of some one individual, a giant in power and wickedness, and withal spreading himself for a time for wider mischief.——Of the "green bay tree," the original gives us only these ideas—a green tree never transplanted but spreading itself abroad in its birth-place. The "bay tree" is the laurel; but I see nothing in the Hebrew word to indicate this species in particular.——Even this mighty sinner, a terror to all, passed suddenly away. I sought him in his old place, but there was nothing left of him.——Some of those who favor the doctrine of the future annihilation of the wicked think to find support in these verses; and also in vs. 20, 38. They should be reminded that David speaks of the present life, not

of the future; of the wicked disappearing from among the living here, not of their condition as living or not living there. It is simply absurd to make David say: "I sought him through the other world as well as this; I sought him in Sheol or in Paradise, and could find him nowhere!" This would be putting a sense into his words that he never dreamed of.

37. Mark the perfect *man*, and behold the upright: for the end of *that* man *is* peace.

38. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

Once more David draws the contrast and calls upon the reader to mark it well. The upright man lives and dies in peace—peace to the very end of his mortal days, and with a blessed hope of immortality which has perfected the peace and rest of his soul to his dying hour, and which a faithful God will by no means disappoint. But the end of the wicked, such men as he contemplates and in that age, is, to be cut off by a violent death, a testimony to the righteous retribution of God's providence here, and a precursor of more retribution yet to be filled out in the world to come.

39. But the salvation of the righteous *is* of the LORD: *he is* their strength in the time of trouble.

40. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

Most appropriately this Psalm closes by ascribing this wonderful salvation of the righteous, not to his personal merit, or to his efficiency in saving himself, but to the Lord alone, his strength in all trouble, his helper and deliverer against all evils and perils, whether of body or soul, whether material or spiritual. In this, David speaks in harmony with the feelings and convictions of every truly righteous man. It is their perpetual joy to ascribe their help here and their salvation both here and hereafter to the glorious Lord alone.

PSALM XXXVIII.

This Psalm is plaintive. David is a sufferer, (*a*) from sickness (vs. 1–8, 10); (*b*) from the desertion of friends (v. 11); (*c*) from the causeless, malign persecution of enemies (vs. 12–20). Three times the strain of the Psalm turns from describing his afflictions to prayer for divine help, viz., vs. 9, 15, and 21, 22.——The author or compiler puts at the head of this Psalm the word, "*to remind*," leaving us to determine from the scope of the Psalm whether this means that David put these words on record to remind *himself* in future years of his bitter experience; or put them in the form of

sacred song and prayer to remind Jehovah of his trials, his confessions of sin and ill-desert, and of his cries for help. The reader will readily see that although the former may often be a worthy reason for a journal or diary of any sad experience, yet in this case the current strain of the Psalm is altogether of the second sort, bringing before God his bitter sufferings as a foundation of prayer for divine help. Obviously it is admissible in prayer to spread out our case before the Lord as David does in this Psalm, not by any means assuming that the Lord has forgotten any of the points, and needs therefore to be reminded, nor that he does not know every feature whether of his sufferings or of his penitence for sin without David s saying a word. But that prayer may be prayer, God invites us to lay our case before him as a child before his human father—a gracious condescension to our weakness, and not an expedient on his part for gaining information not otherwise in his possession.——There is at least a fair measure of probability in the supposition that this Psalm and also the next following were written very late in David's life, on the occasion of the conspiracy of Adonijah. See remarks introductory to Ps. 39.

1. O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2. For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.

David fully recognizes his suffering from sickness as a chastening by the arrows of the Almighty, in faithful discipline for his sin. He prays that the Lord would mercifully stay his hand.——"Stick fast" carries the thought somewhat beyond the original, which means only that they sink deep, press heavily; and not that they can not be easily extracted. The verbs translated "stick fast" and "presseth sore," are the same, save that one is passive in form and the other not.

3. *There is* no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither *is there any* rest in my bones because of my sin.

4. For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

5. My wounds stink *and* are corrupt because of my foolishness.

I see no good reason to doubt that these verses and others in this Psalm (*e. g.*, vs. 7, 8, 10) describe bodily disease. The expressions are strong, perhaps poetically so. A prosaic statement might qualify them somewhat.——"Mine iniquities gone over my head," suppose him in figure, sinking in deep and drowning waters. Changing the figure, they are a burden upon him, insupportable, crushing. His wounds, *i. e.*, bodily pains, considered as the

infliction of God's chastisements, are suppurating and offensive because of his folly in the sense of sin. The choice of this word, "folly," to denote the sin for which God smote him, seems to suggest that his sin was morally no less loathsome and disgusting than his diseased and putrid body—a natural correlation between the moral offense and the physical penalty for it.

6. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

7. For my loins are filled with a loathsome *disease:* and *there is* no soundness in my flesh.

8. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.

The first verb means, I have *writhed* in pain. I walk about as a mourner all the day, as one bearing a heavy affliction.——My loins are filled with inflammation, burning heat.——"I am feeble," is made in the original more definite.——I am *cold*, vitality gone. —— "Roared" might as well have been sighed, groaned.

9. LORD, all my desire *is* before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

All these fearful sufferings and all the longing desire I feel to be delivered from them are before thine eye. Let that eye look in compassion upon me and thine ear listen to my sad plaint of woe.

10. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.

"My heart palpitates," beating with swift motion. Disease or grief produces blindness.

11. My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

12. They also that seek after my life lay snares *for me;* and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

Those who have loved and befriended me stand afar from me thus smitten of God—literally, stand afar from my smiting.—— "Imagine deceits;" they devise deceitful measures to destroy me. The original may mean either devise or utter, as in the parallel clause we have "speak."

13. But I, as a deaf *man*, heard not; and *I was* as a dumb man *that* openeth not his mouth.

14. Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth *are* no reproofs.

15. For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

In v. 13, the verbs for "heard" and "openeth" are both in the future tense, and should be taken therefore, as expressing his deliberate purpose, thus: But (I said) as a deaf man I will not hear, I will be as one dumb who will not open his mouth. I will bear it all meekly, with not one word of retort, not one sharp reply or complaint. The reason appears in v. 15: For in thee, Lord, do I hope. Vengeance belongeth to the Lord; I commit its visitation on mine enemies to him alone. This becomes naturally a powerful plea for the interposition of his God. The spirit of it is admirable. God will never be slow to manifest his approbation of it.

16. For I said, *Hear me*, lest *otherwise* they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth they magnify *themselves* against me.

17. For I *am* ready to halt, and my sorrow *is* continually before me.

The italic words, "*Hear me*," "*otherwise*," may be dispensed with by the following not unnatural construction: "For I have spoken," (*i. e.*, to Thee) 'lest they should exult over me." To which he adds; When my foot slipped they did magnify themselves against me, and therefore I could not but know their temper and spirit.——"Ready to halt," to limp, moving as one disabled, lame.

18. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.

In view of these afflictions I do not claim to be sinless, nor do I refuse to take blame to myself. On the contrary I publicly confess my iniquity; I deplore my sin—a vitally important part of true prayer in a case like this.

19. But mine enemies *are* lively, *and* they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

20. They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow *the thing that* good is.

In the phrase, "mine enemies are lively," the Hebrew word * must mean either living or life, and by no means "lively," in the sense of spry, nimble. On the whole I prefer the construction, enemies *as to life*, those who seek my life; my mortal enemies; the whole verse amounting to this: My mortal enemies are strong [Hebrew, bony, powerful]; those who hate me wrongfully are many.——Disregarding the Hebrew accents we might arrange v. 20: "Men rendering evil for good will hate me because I follow good." With proper regard for the accents, thus: "And they are requiting evil for good; they will hate me because of my following good." The ultimate meaning is essentially the same.

21. Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.

22. Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

All these points in his case and not least the outrageous wickedness of his persecutors give force to his final prayer that God would neither forsake nor remain at distance, but hasten speedily to his succor and salvation.

PSALM XXXIX.

This Psalm, ascribed to David, is assigned to the care of Jeduthun, as were Ps. 62 and 77 also. This name is often associated with Heman in the historical books, both being prominent in the service of song. (Compare 1 Chron. 16 : 41, 42, and 25 : 1–6.)—— The scope, the real animus, of this Psalm seems to me not perfectly clear. We naturally ask, What are those painful thoughts, welling up from the depths of his soul which he restrains himself from uttering in the presence of the wicked? Why this self-imposed restraint? Were these thoughts morally right, or morally wrong? If right, why should it be wrong or even unwise to express them? If wrong, why should he indulge them in his soul even secretly? or at least, why make them a theme of sacred song?——Under what circumstances was the Psalm written? At what period in David's life? Is any clue afforded by the circumstances and date which may aid us to solve the enigmas, throwing light upon the otherwise dark points of the Psalm?——Of the opinions on these various points which I here advance it seems proper to say that while I hold them with only a moderate measure of confidence, I deem them more satisfactory than any other views that have been before me. I hope they are at least an approximation toward absolute truth.——Let it now be assumed that the date of the writing was very near the close of his life. The last verse suggests this forcibly; "O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more!" We may avail ourselves of the brief historical facts of this period found 1 Kings 1 and 2: "David was old and stricken in years; they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat." The vital forces were low; the living fire had almost gone out from his once vigorous frame. New trials are sprung upon him. Another son, a younger brother of the heartless, selfish Absalom, had struck for the scepter; Joab the old chieftain and Abiathar of high rank in the priesthood, were with Adonijah in this uprising. David sees at a glance the perils of this crisis; he feels its stern demands upon him for his utmost energies. It agonizes him that his physical powers are so far gone and so unequal to the struggle with such adversaries. A painful sense of the shortness of life and of the frailty of man comes over him, and he can scarcely repress the feeling of rebellion against

these ordinations of providence.——If we study carefully the words of Hezekiah, when he looked death in the face under a somewhat similar sense of his responsibility as king, and a like solicitude to meet them and do much more life-work before he should lay his scepter down in death, we shall perhaps understand better how David felt in this emergency. It would seem from the language in this Psalm that David had more thoughts and other than he felt it wise to utter; especially before the wicked. Very probably there were some that he did not altogether like to meet and contemplate calmly in his solitude. His soul was troubled, we may suppose, not merely with the trying facts of his case, but with his own emotions and moral feelings under their pressure. These suppositions seem to account fairly for the language before us in this Psalm.——The theory suggested in Smith's Dictionary as to the date and occasion of this Psalm, viz.: the scenes of Ziklag (1 Sam. 30), seems to me far less adequate than the above to meet the facts indicated here. At that point David was neither sick, infirm, nor apparently near death, but on the contrary, vigorous, and full of courage in his God (1 Sam. 30: 6).

1. I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

2. I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, *even* from good; and my sorrow was stirred.

Somewhat more literally we might translate: "I said, Let me restrain my ways [myself] from misusing the tongue; let me restrain my mouth with a curb so long as the wicked are before me."——"I held my peace even from good" is taken by some to mean, from saying even good things; but will bear a slightly different construction, viz.: from speaking before the good; *i. e*, I held in my words in the presence not only of the wicked, but of the good as well. I rigorously suppressed all utterance of my troubled thoughts, and consequently my sorrows were deeply stirred—*troubled* the Hebrew has it.

3. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned: *then* spake I with my tongue.

Giving no vent to this inward fire, his heart became hot within, past endurance he would seem to imply. While he thought and did nothing but think, the fire burned the more, and then he "spake with his tongue"—the very thing he had previously resolved *not* to do.

4. LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it *is; that* I may know how frail I *am.*

5. Behold, thou hast made my days *as* a handbreadth; and my age *is* as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state *is* altogether vanity. Selah.

These words admit a construction which consists with reverence toward God and is every way morally appropriate; and on the other hand they *might* be uttered in a tone and for a purpose very exceptionable. The prayer—"Impress me with a just sense of human frailty"—no man need apologize for making. But it may be quite another thing to say, "Lord, open to me this strange and hard mystery of my short life; tell me why it is that thou givest me days by handbreadths only—that my whole life is as nothing before thee, and that every man is made to be only an utter vanity. Why is all this?"

6. Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up *riches*, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

The word translated "surely" has commonly the sense of *only*. *Only* as a vanishing shadow does the mighty man live; *only* in vain do they toil and groan. One heaps up riches, but knows not who shall appropriate them. This is at best a somber view of life. As already remarked, it might all be said (possibly) in a reverent spirit, submissively accepting these ordinations of providence as necessarily and indeed justly incident to a world of sin and consequent mortality and death. But this strong setting forth of the vanity of all human life might also be made in the spirit of dissatisfied questioning, not to say of unsuppressed complaint. The very strength of these representations of the vanity of life, coupled with the questioning tone as if no good answer could be given, and with the further indications of a consciousness that these thoughts ought never to be spoken before the wicked or even the good, seems to me to favor strongly the latter construction.

7. And now, Lord, what wait I for? my hope *is* in thee.

Here the religious feeling appears coming up again to power. Where is my hope and my refuge under the pressure of these sore afflictions? In God only. What else can I wait and hope for? Nothing else in all the universe; nothing else can bring me relief in this emergency. O my God, do not forsake me; my only hope is in thee.

8. Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

9. I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst *it*.

From all my sins deliver me; even from these sins of my repining heart and of my unrestrained tongue. Let me not be an object of reproach to men like Nabal, more wicked than foolish, or rather foolish in the sense of wicked. [The Hebrew word is Nabal.] David saw that if God should fail him in this emergency, Adonijah and Joab and their associates would exult over him as one abandoned of his God and of his prestige of power.——"I am dumb

and I will not open my mouth, for *thou* hast done it all." I have said too much; I can make no apology for my hasty complaining words. I will not open my mouth in self-vindication, much less in any more complaint against God, for all this vanity of human life is the ordination of thine own providence. I see thy hand in it all.——"Will not open" precisely represents the Hebrew tense. "*Thou* hast done it," makes the word thou emphatic, the Hebrew pronoun being expressed for emphasis. It is God's own hand. How strangely was I beside myself to question the wisdom or the right of what thou hast done!

10. Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.

This is prayer that God would lift off his heavy hand and stay this sore infliction. Perhaps there underlies it a fresh sense of having doubly forfeited God's favor by thoughts and words which his conscience now condemns.

11. When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man *is* vanity. Selah.

If thou shalt still rebuke me as I consciously deserve, I perish utterly. If thy rebukes correct me for mine iniquity, I can not stand before thee. Let mercy prevail, O my God!——In the last clause, "surely" is better read *only*. Every man is only vanity; nothing better; nothing else.

12. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I *am* a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers *were*.

This is pleading for mercy.——"Be not silent to my tears."——"A stranger and sojourner" builds a plea for sparing mercy upon the very frailty of his earthly life. I have at best but few days to live; like all my fathers I only sojourn here for a day. O let me find a few hours more of thy sparing mercy! See the same words 1 Chron. 29: 15, where they stand historically near the close of David's life.

13. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.

"Spare me," in the Hebrew, signifies, avert thy face, thought of as stern and frowning.——"Recover strength" has in the original the usual if not uniform sense of putting on a cheerful countenance. Sentiment; that my face my brighten up before I go hence and be no more.

PSALM XL.

If we were to classify or grade the Psalms supposed to be prophetic of Christ according to the amount of evidence which sustains their Messianic character, we might put in the first class those which, in addition to other evidence, indicate him by name, *e. g.*, Ps. 110: "The Lord said unto *my Lord;*" Ps. 2: "I have set my King," etc.; "Thou art my Son," etc.; "Kiss the Son," etc.; Ps. 45: "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever;" "Therefore, O God, hath thy God anointed Thee," etc., etc.——We might put into a second class those in which no distinctive name appears but which were manifestly regarded by the apostles as Messianic; which moreover admit, in all their points, of legitimate reference to him, and which have some points not easily or perhaps not possibly referable to David or any other mere man. In this class we may put Ps. 16, 22, and 40.——A third class may comprise those from which quotations are made by the apostles and applied to Christ, yet not in argument and not in a way to show that they certainly referred the Psalm to Christ, but only that they found language which might be fitly, perhaps forcibly, applied to his case. Ps. 69 may represent this class. It contains nothing that may not readily be applied to David; nothing therefore that distinctively defines it to be Messianic.——I have thrown out at this point these proximate hints toward a classification for the sake of locating the Psalm before us close upon the dividing line which runs between the Messianic and the non-Messianic. The amount of Messianic evidence is less in it than in any other Psalm which I would regard as Messianic. Yet this evidence is in my judgment sufficient to justify its location in this class. Naturally therefore it has difficult points which need to be discussed with candor and thoroughness.——The strong proofs of its reference to Christ lie in vs. 6–8, viz., in the points made in these verses and in the application of them to Christ by the writer to the Hebrews (10: 5–10). Hence these proofs are made up jointly of the authority of this writer as inspired, and of the pertinence of the points made in this passage to Christ and Christ only.——In general we may say of the other points made in the Psalm that, while they might apply to David, they might also under a fair construction apply equally well to Christ. Therefore the whole Psalm should be referred to Christ. I can not accept the interpretation of those who rend the Psalm asunder at the close of v. 11, or indeed at any other point, and apply what precedes to Christ and what follows to David; nor can I admit the double-sense interpretation which would apply the same identical words to both David and Christ, assuming that certain of the ideas couched under those words are for David only, or as the case may be, for Christ only, and certain other ideas, for David and Christ both. This doctrine of interpreting Messianic prophecy must be responsible for having done much to impair, not to say destroy, the confidence

of sober, intelligent minds in all prophecy. There is a more excellent way.——As to the date and suggestive occasion of this Psalm, its location in this group of four (38–41), and its numerous points of analogy with the other three of the group, strongly favor the same date and surroundings. This supposition does not militate in the least against its exclusive reference to the Messiah, for in all the cases where the spirit of prophecy led David to speak of his greater Son, he first brought strongly before his mind those points of his own history which were suggestive—we might say, *typical*—of like features in the history, sufferings, and work of Christ. We see this in those Psalms which treat of the reigning Messiah (*e. g.*, Ps. 2 and 110); also in those which present a suffering Messiah, viz., Ps. 16, 22, and therefore naturally Ps. 40.

1. I waited patiently for the LORD; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

2. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, *and* established my goings.

3. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, *even* praise unto our God: many shall see *it*, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

The words "patient," "patiently," have chiefly lost their original meaning in English, and a secondary one has become the primary. "Patient," from the Latin "*patiens*," originally meant a sufferer. The doctor's "patient" holds this idea still; and we also speak of Christ's "passion," not as we speak of a passionate man, but purely in the old sense of his suffering. But in almost all connections we drop the old idea of suffering, and think only of quiet endurance, long-suffering, making prominent the idea of quietness and self-control. In our passage we must go back to the original sense *suffer*. "I waited sufferingly, intensely, with earnest longings, an intensity of feeling which amounted to real suffering." This was what our translators meant to express and according to the usage of their times, did express. The Hebrew idiom also gives the idea of intense waiting, a longing, which involved very strong emotion.——This waiting on God was not in vain, for "he bowed his ear unto me and heard my cry," *i. e.*, to answer and to save. I was sinking as one in a deep pit and in miry clay; he lifted me out and set my feet on rock, and made my goings firm. This was equivalent to putting a new song into my mouth, giving me occasion to praise him for new mercies. Many shall see this gracious deliverance, and learn from it to trust in Jehovah for their own salvation from all their straits and perils.——If now the question be asked whether this can refer to Jesus in his human nature and relations, the answer must be affirmative. Did he not give decisive intimations of a most intense and suffering attitude of waiting upon God in prayer and strong crying? Did he not say,

"I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished?" Have we not read in his history of one whole night of prayer to God? Can we forget the scenes of "sad Gethsemane?" Need we be reminded that the writer to the Hebrews alludes to "the days of his flesh" when he had offered prayer and supplication with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared? (Heb. 5: 7.)

4. Blessed *is* that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

Jesus had found this blessedness in his experience, and therefore most fitly commended such trust to all who may be under trials and afflictions, in any measure similar. Let his people make their Lord alone their trust, and never look (in this sense of trusting) to the proud. The word "respecteth," meaning primarily to *turn toward one*, implies looking to one for help in need.

5. Many, O LORD my God, *are* thy wonderful works *which* thou hast done, and thy thoughts *which are* to us-ward: they can not be reckoned up in order unto thee: *if* I would declare and speak of *them*, they are more than can be numbered.

God's works of mercy and thoughts of love toward us, so many and so precious, impress the speaker's mind deeply. The clause, "They can not be reckoned up in order unto thee," is in the original a model of conciseness; somewhat thus: "There is no arranging them to thee;" it is impossible to classify them and set them forth in full and orderly detail.——Another sense has been put upon these words, thus: There is nothing that compares with them. But the former is preferable, especially because it allows us to continue the same line of thought through the verse. "Let me set them forth [I said to myself] and speak of them in order; they are too many to be numbered."——Impressed by this view of the greatness and the number of God's blessings upon him, he is drawn in grateful love to ask: What can I do for God? This leads the mind to the words that follow.

6. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

7. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book *it is* written of me,

8. I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law *is* within my heart.

The thought lying upon the face of this passage is that a sense

of God's great mercies constrains the speaker to a grateful obedience and a full consecration of himself to the doing of God's will. Enumerating the various forms of sacrificial offering prescribed in the Mosaic ritual, he says, These, O Lord, thou dost not require of me. I am ready for any service which may be indicated by thy expressed will. I love obedience to that will above my chief joy. Thy law is within my heart, most dearly loved—to be obeyed with supreme delight.——Giving attention next to points that may be said to lie deeper than the surface we may note that the connection of this verse with v. 5, applying all to the Messiah, may be this: An impressive sense of that great love with which "God so loved the world as to give up for it his only begotten Son," inspired the Son to say in a like spirit of self-sacrificing benevolence—"I come into a world of sin, assume the nature of the race I am to save, and bow my soul to bear any burdens of suffering with obedience unto death that I may do the will of the Father in reference to the means and appliances for human salvation." So Jesus said during his life upon earth: "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4: 34). The writer to the Hebrews suggests that "though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"—*i. e.*, he received a discipline unto obedience by his experience of suffering.——Emphatic and important are the words: "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me." The Messiah was long known under the name "*the coming One*," "he that should come"—phrases which have their germ in this and kindred prophecies. "In the volume of the book," *i. e.*, in the Pentateuch [no other book then extant bore this title] it was written: "The scepter shall not pass from Judah until Shiloh *come*" (Gen. 49: 10). So here it is written concerning me, *i. e.*, that I am to come, and devote myself to doing the perfect will of God, even though at the cost of untold sufferings.——"Mine ears hast thou opened." The Hebrew means primarily, thou hast digged,* but in the only sense applicable to the ear, digged *open*, that he might hear more perfectly every indication of the divine will. Closely analogous is Isaiah 50: 4: "He wakeneth mine ear morning by morning to hear as pupils do." Some have found here a reference to the Mosaic regulation that in case a Hebrew servant preferred to be bound to his master for life instead of becoming free after six years, his ear must be bored with an awl. The other explanation is more probable, especially because Isaiah has it in an analogous form, perhaps borrowing the idea from this passage.——A remarkable fact concerning this phrase must now be noticed. The Septuagint translation gives it: "A body thou hast prepared for me." Much critical labor has been expended on this extraordinary translation, but no proof has been found that they had a different Hebrew text from ours. It has never been made even plausible that they thought the words they have given are exact equivalents of the

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Hebrew words *in their primary, literal sense.* The only satisfactory construction is that they thought the sense of the Hebrew words obscure and therefore gave their view of the ultimate meaning by a very liberal paraphrase instead of a literal translation. They supposed the passage to mean this: The sacrifices of the Mosaic ritual thou dost not require of me; but thou dost require me to become a Lamb for sacrifice, and therefore dost provide me a *body* which may in due time be slain in sacrifice for the sins of the world.——This Septuagint version of the passage the writer to the Hebrews quotes in full (10: 5–10) virtually explaining the "coming" here spoken of to be Christ's coming into the world by his incarnation in human flesh, making the broadest possible discrimination between the Mosaic sacrifices on the one hand, and the offering of his own body once for all on the other, declaring that "he taketh away the first that he may establish the second;" and moreover giving great prominence to the point made very prominent by David, viz.: that all this was *the will of God*—the whole scheme of salvation having its birth in his eternal purpose and infinite love, and Jesus suffering all in loving obedience to that will.——Let it be noted here that this remarkable version of the Septuagint is really a traditional interpretation of the passage. It shows us how it was understood by the learned Jews of that age when this version was made, say two or three centuries before Christ. They saw in this passage the promised Messiah, and what is yet more, a Messiah becoming *incarnate.*——Again, let it be noted that this passage is altogether inapplicable to David, especially when taken as it must be in antithesis with *not offering* the Mosaic sacrifices. The age of David was entirely too early for him to speak *with reference to himself* of not offering the Mosaic sacrifices, but coming in this emphatic sense *as a substitute* for those offerings. Moreover David was never called of God to offer his body a *human* sacrifice. Hence we can give these words no satisfactory explanation save by referring them to Jesus Christ.

9. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

10. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy loving-kindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

"Preached righteousness," the Hebrew word being the most perfect equivalent which the language affords for *evangelizing, i. e.*, preaching the glad tidings of gospel salvation. It is used repeatedly in this sense by Isaiah (40: 9, and 52: 7).——The expressions, "In the great congregation;" "not concealed from the great congregation," take their form from the times of David when the great congregation of all Israel convened at the one place for worship; but in sense it purports that Christ proclaimed this gospel

to the Israel of his time and through them to the wide world. Having made propitiation for sin by his death, he proclaimed for all the race free pardon and God's righteousness in forgiving sin. These verses make this idea very emphatic.

11. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy loving-kindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

Following the original we must make this not a prayer but an expression of confidence: "Thou wilt not withhold thy tender mercies from me," etc. The ground of this confidence lies in his own devotion to the will of God as expressed in the verses immediately preceding. The definite correspondence of thought between those verses and this is somewhat obscured by the translators of our version who should have preserved the same verb in both passages; thus: "I have not *withheld* my lips, O Lord, thou knowest" (v. 9): "therefore thou wilt not *withhold* thy tender mercies from me" (v. 11). The Hebrew has the same verb in both passages.

12. For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

The main difficulty felt in applying this Psalm to the Messiah lies in the words, "mine iniquities." How, it is asked, can this possibly be said by Jesus or on his behalf, since he was "without sin?"——To this I answer: (1) It is conceded by the best lexicographers and critics that this Hebrew word * may mean not precisely sin, but the punishment of sin; the sufferings which sin occasions.——(2) The parallelism with "innumerable evils" demands this sense in the present case.——(3) The verb that follows, "have taken hold upon me," forbids the sense of personal sins. It is not sin, but only the suffering or evil connected in some way with sin which can be said to *take hold upon* one. This Hebrew verb translated, "have taken hold upon," † should be carefully examined. Important cases of its use appear in Deut. 28: 2, 15, 45. "All these blessings shall come on thee and *overtake* thee." All these curses shall come upon thee and *overtake* thee;" "all these curses shall pursue thee and *overtake* thee." The sense therefore is that of something befalling one *from without* and usually an infliction of evil. So in Ps. 69: 24. "Let the burning heat of thy wrath *fall upon them;*" in our version, "take hold of them." Also Zech. 1: 6. "Did not my words" [of threatening] "*take hold* of your fathers?"——This established usage of the verb suffices to show that the phrase in question can by no means speak of personal sins, but only of the infliction of evil in some way, for some reason.——(4) We can now properly advance another step and compare this language with that which

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appears both in Old Testament prophecy and in New Testament history with reference to the evils (in the sense of sufferings) brought upon the Messiah. The passages are well known and they are legion: *e. g.*, "A man of sorrows;" "hath borne our griefs;" "wounded for our transgressions;" "the chastisement of our peace was upon him;" "the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquities of us all;" "for the transgression of my people was he stricken;" "he bare the sin of many;" (Isaiah 53 throughout). So the New Testament: "He hath made him to be *sin* for us who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5: 21); "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal. 3: 13); "Who did no sin, but his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree;" . . . "by whose stripes we were healed" (1 Pet. 2: 22, 24).——Comparing these various passages with the one before us it will be readily seen (*a*) that both speak of immense suffering coming upon the Messiah for sin; (*b*) that there is a striking similarity in the *mode* in which these sufferings came upon him. "Have taken hold upon me;" "have overtaken me" (the true sense of the word here), are only expanded and changed in form, not in sense, in the phrases—"The Lord hath laid upon him;" "it pleased the Lord to bruise him;" "God hath made him to be sin" (a sin-offering) for us, etc.——A careful comparison of the phraseology used by prophets and apostles on this mysterious point of the sufferings of Christ may well relieve our minds of all surprise that the Messiah should say here in briefest terms—"Innumerable evils have compassed me about;" "mine iniquities" [those I am made to bear] "have taken hold upon me" with a grasp I can not loosen, as a burden I can not shake off.——"So that I am not able to look up," should rather be, "so that I can not *see*;" all is dark as death about me. The darkness over all the land from the sixth hour to the ninth (Luke 23: 44) was only a symbol of that "horror of great darkness" which fell upon the spirit of the world's Great Sufferer in those hours of his mysterious woe.—— "Therefore my heart faileth me" fills out this picture of untold sorrow. It seemed too much to be endured. Did that fearful darkness shut off hope? Did it hide from the Great Sufferer the face of his Father? We may recall his words on the very eve of these agonies: "This is your hour and the power of darkness (Luke 22: 53), *i. e.*, the hour for you and for the powers of darkness to do your worst against the suffering Son of man. Beyond this, what can we yet know?

13. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

What could such a sufferer do but pray? This prophetic foreshowing is entirely at one with the history as we see in Gethsemane; on the cross; and in the expressive words of the writer to the Hebrews, "Strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save!"

14. Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

15. Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

The Hebrew verbs in these two verses are simple futures with nothing in the verses themselves to indicate prayer or imprecation. It is only their connection with v. 13 that favors the construction given in our English version.——"Wish me evil" is less strong than the Hebrew which means, *take delight* in my calamity, the word being the same as in v 8: "I *delight* to do thy will." "Evil" here is the same as the "evils innumerable" of v. 12.

The question will arise, Is the spirit of these verses at one with the Savior's prayer on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?"——I answer, (*a*) Taking these words as they stand in the original, *i. e.*, as prediction only, they are perfectly in harmony with the Savior's own words of prediction: "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate!" (Luke 13: 35) and also with the facts of the case.——(*b*) While it is the mission of Jesus to offer pardon to the penitent and to pray that sinners, even his murderers, may repent and receive it, it is equally his mission to bring retribution both in time and eternity upon those whom no mercy can melt to penitence, and who bend their energies to frustrate all his endeavors to save the lost.——(*c*) In these verses his enemies are seen and thought of only as madly bent on heightening his torture and thwarting his designs of mercy. So considered, what more or other could the Messiah do than breast their endeavors with his utmost strength, and carry through the scheme of human salvation despite of their mad opposition?—— It ought not to be forgotten that Jesus saw in the malign spirit and efforts of his betrayers and murderers the very hand and heart of Satan. Shall it trouble us that he resists Satan at every point and gives him no quarter? That were a miserably misplaced sympathy. Let us rather rejoice that this conflict is to the bitter end—to the very death—and Satan the one to fall!

16. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.

17. But I *am* poor and needy; *yet* the Lord thinketh upon me: thou *art* my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

The original of v. 16 is also future and not imperative; prediction, and not prayer. Such results are forever sure, and no less glorious than sure!——These last five verses reappear nearly verbatim in Ps. 70. I see no occasion to assign any other special reason for this than that they are precious words and by no means inappropriate to be sung apart from the connection in which they stand in

Ps. 40. Or may it be supposed that they had become so familiar as the closing verses of this Psalm that they suggested their relation to the foregoing verses here, even though sung and read in that disconnected form as we find them in Ps. 70?

PSALM XLI.

This Psalm is the language of one suffering from sickness. He is conscious of having himself befriended the sick and helpless, and therefore is confident that God will deal tenderly with him. He has malign enemies who have been his professed friends but who now exult in the hope of his death and plot mischief and lies against him. Such hostility drives him to his great Friend above for help and consolation.——This Psalm has many points in common with Ps. 38 and 39. It is therefore highly probable that it was an outgrowth of the same historic circumstances and bears the same date, *i. e.*, near the close of David's life, under the trials that befell him from the conspiracy of Adonijah (1 Kings 1). It will at least give a certain life-likeness to the picture to assume that those were the circumstances under which the Psalm was written.——The fact that these four Psalms (38–41) close the first of the five books of Psalms favors somewhat this view of their date. If they were the latest written—the last effusions of his poetic inspiration—this is their appropriate place in this first collection of the Psalms of David.

1. Blessed *is* he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.

The Hebrew word for "poor" may sometimes mean the moneyless, but more naturally the weak, the dependent, and not improbably here, the sick or the frail in health.——"Considereth" is somewhat more than *thinketh upon*. The primary sense is to look attentively toward, but here with the farther idea of looking *kindly*, with due sympathy and with prompt relief. Such an one the Lord delivers in the day of his trouble. Loving the spirit that sympathizes with the suffering, he will miss no fit opportunity to express his love by rewarding it openly.

2. The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive; *and* he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

3. The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.

"Keep him alive," cause him to live in the sense of restoring him when he is sick. "He shall be blessed"—prospered in the *land* [better than "earth"] *i. e.*, in the Lord's promised land of Canaan.——"Thou wilt not deliver," etc., is in the original rather

a prayer than an assurance. "Do not thou deliver him up to the soul [Hebrew] of his enemies"—in the sense of their wicked desire. The sudden change of construction from the future to the imperative, from prediction to prayer, indicates the deep feeling and strong sympathy of the writer. He can not endure that God should fail of helping such a good man and therefore gives utterance here to this prayer.——"Make all his bed in his sickness" means in the original much more than making up a sick man's bed by airing, stirring, and making it comfortable. It means to change his sick bed to a bed of healthful repose, implying the change of his state from sickness to health. The Hebrew word, having the sense to turn or change, looks for its object beyond his bed to his bodily state.

4. I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

In the first words, "I said," the original makes the pronoun *I*, very prominent, not to say emphatic. For my part, as respects myself, I lift up this one prayer of my heart: "Be merciful unto me and take my sins away." The striking point of the verse is that he regards his bodily sickness as occasioned by his sin. The reader will notice the same sentiment in Ps. 38: 3-5, 17, 18, and 39: 8, 10, 11, which may be supposed to refer to the same points in his history.

5. Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?

The first verb is future; mine enemies do and *will* speak evil of me; I know them too well to expect any thing else. Adonijah and his sympathizing associates were waiting for the death of the aged king with aspirations so selfish as to be really malign. They longed to see his name go down so low as to interpose no barrier to their schemes.

6. And if he come to see *me*, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; *when* he goeth abroad, he telleth *it*.

7. All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.

8. An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him: and now, that he lieth he shall rise up no more.

"If he come to see"—not necessarily to see *me*, for the original does not say this, but if he comes to look about from a nearer point of view—to explore and see how the case stands, then he will speak untruthfully, artfully concealing his real designs. The Hebrew accents favor this reading of the next clause: As to his heart, he will gather scandal and lies into it.——In the first clause of v. 8, the "evil disease" is probably a moral evil—some sin that

in the view of his enemies brought down God's judgments upon him. Hence their assurance that he could not rise from his bed again. This was indeed, one of the bitterest ingredients in his cup.

9. Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up *his* heel against me.

Another most bitter thing was the treachery of former friends. They had violated the most sacred rights of hospitality and friendship; perhaps he means the dearest ties of relationship, for Adonijah was a son, from his father's own table; Joab also and Abiathar had been in most intimate relations to the royal person and table.——To "lift up the heel" is a proverb, meaning they have turned away from me, throwing up the heel as they went. These words were said by Jesus (John 13: 18) to be fulfilled in the treachery of Judas. This fulfilling is in the sense of filling out the full sense of these words—a case which is tantamount to the full idea here. In the same way, when the Lord by a warning dream called Joseph with Mary and the child Jesus out of Egypt, the fact filled out again the sense of those words of Hosea, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." (Matt. 2: 15, and Hos. 11: 1). It is not necessary to interpret these words as directly prophetic of the treachery of Judas. As originally written they may have referred only to the treachery of Adonijah and his associates.

10. But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite them.

"Raise me up," although they have said, "he shall never rise" (v. 8). Do thou this very thing which they vainly think can never be.——"Requite them;" but this does not demand the sense of retaliation, much less of selfish, revengeful retaliation, for it may mean, that I may repay them good for their evil. Indeed the Hebrew word strongly favors this sense—to make good again, to make all whole, sound. David has repeatedly expressed this sentiment in his Psalms (35: 12–14, and 7: 4); and yet better, has lived it forth in his actual deeds (1 Sam. 24: 9–15, and 26: 18–25). There is no occasion therefore, to give these words the bad sense of a malign, wicked retaliation.

11. By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.

12. And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face forever.

"Because mine enemy will not triumph over me," *i. e.*, will not have any occasion to triumph over me. The verb is future, expressing his confidence in God that they will not succeed in their wicked plots so as to exult over his fall.——"Upholdest me *because*

of my integrity rather than *in* it; *i. e.*, because my conduct toward them and toward thee has been in the main morally right.——"Thou settest me before thy face;" under thine eye, where thou wilt carefully watch over me and guard me safely forever.

13. Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and amen.

This doxology closes the first of the five books of the Psalms. A similar doxology occurs at the end of the second, third, and fourth books (Ps. 72: 19, and 89: 52, and 106: 48). In the case of the last book, the last three Psalms are essentially one prolonged doxology.

PSALM XLII.

This Psalm opens the second book. It is a "Maschil," a Psalm *for instruction.*——Our English version reads, "*for* the sons of Korah," assuming that it was committed by the author into their hands to be sung in the sanctuary. The sons of Korah are well known to have been among the leading musicians in the temple service, their names being associated with those of Heman and Asaph. (See 1 Chron. 6: 22, 31, 37, and 25: 1–7, and 2 Chron. 20: 19). Eleven Psalms bear their name in the caption as here, viz., 42, 44–49, 84, 85, 87, 88. But whether in these Psalms and in this one especially, they are authors or only singers has been earnestly debated, yet with no absolutely certain result. It is for the most part admitted that this Psalm gives the experience of David when driven from the holy city before Absalom his son. This is the point of prime importance to the interpretation and illustration of the Psalm. The question whether David himself wrote it or some one of the sons of Korah, is quite a secondary matter, provided we may assume that in the latter case it was written to represent David's experiences in his flight before Absalom.——On the question of authorship, these considerations favor the sons of Korah: (1) The Hebrew preposition is constantly used elsewhere to indicate the author, the prefix (l), meaning *to* in the sense *ascribed to*, but translated "of," a Psalm *of* David; "a Psalm *of* the sons of Korah."——(2) In the eleven Psalms which have this caption, there is nothing which positively indicates David to be the author. The sons of Korah may have written them all.——(3) They seem to have been authors since Solomon is compared with them (1 Kings 4: 31).——(4) These eleven Psalms use Elohim much more than Jehovah for the name of God. David currently uses Jehovah much more than Elohim.——(5) The style is thought to be more bold than in the Psalms known to be David's. Comparing Ps. 42 with Ps. 3 on the same subject, we shall see force in this comparison.——In favor of the authorship of David are these two main considerations: (1) It is far more natural and probable that David should write his own personal experiences

than that others should do it. He was accustomed to write his own.——(2) It is very unnatural that the Psalm should be ascribed to many authors rather than to one. Authorship is legitimately the product of some one mind. Never so many sons of Korah might *sing* it, and might have the charge of it for the service of song.——These points may suffice to show how nicely the considerations on either side balance each other.——Every point in this Psalm is pertinent to the case of David seeking safety by flight from Jerusalem before the formidable conspiracy of Absalom. The history of these scenes stands in 2 Sam. 15–19. The longing for the worship of the sanctuary; the yet deeper longing for the manifestation of God's presence and favor; and definitely, the localities mentioned (v. 6); "the land of Jordan and of the Hermonites," etc., concur to assign the Psalm to those events in David's personal history.

1. As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

2. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

The "hart" (the male deer), hot and faint in the chase or on the mountains of Judah, thirsts intensely for "the water-brooks." So David's soul thirsts and longs for God's manifested presence and love. V. 2 beautifully reiterates the thought: "for God, the living God," not the vain, unreal, dead gods of the idolaters; but one forever living and for evermore the refuge and the joy of those who know and trust him. When shall I ever come again to appear in his lovely courts, a joyous worshiper? To be exiled from his throne and from the city he had conquered and built himself for his royal home might naturally have cost him some pangs of grief; but he does not even name this in comparison with exile from the house of God and the place where his honor dwelt. And yet we must suppose that his heart is far more upon *God himself* than upon the *place* of his usual manifestation. ——This uprising of Absalom was to David at once national and domestic; it struck with the same blow both his throne and his home. He saw in it a judgment from God, not so much upon his nation as upon himself, and upon himself rather for his sins in the matter of Uriah than for any maladministration as king. God was fearfully calling to remembrance the sad scenes of his family history. David doubtless felt that he deserved this exile from the city and sanctuary of his God; but O, did he not long to be forgiven of God and to be restored once more as a pardoned child!

3. My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?

"Meat," not flesh but food—a most expressive figure, evincing the deepest grief through the livelong day and night. It heightened this grief that his enemies tauntingly said, Where is thy God now?

Essentially the same sentiment though rhetorically less bold appears in Ps. 3: 2: "Many there be who say of my soul, There is no help for him in God." Perhaps he thinks of those curses from Shimei who charged that God was visiting upon him the blood of the house of Saul (2 Sam. 16: 7, 8). It is in human nature to bear such maledictions and reproaches tolerably when one's own conscience is quiet. But when under God's chastening hand they become perpetually suggestive of bitter sins for which we can make no apology, then comes the agony of the smitten soul!

4. When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

"I pour out my soul in me"—words of intense emotion and most poignant grief. The memory of those sacred festal scenes when in solemn procession the vast concourse of people moved up the hill of Zion to the sacred tabernacle, the hallowed presence chamber of the Most High, is in painful contrast with this exile and its desolate surroundings; yet this is sad mainly because so suggestive of the lost presence of God. For all Christian experience witnesses that even such an exile as this from home and throne, on those mountains of Hermon, never so far away from the hill of Zion, would have been trivial if God had been there in his joyous presence with its impressive manifestations.——This construction of the verse, in harmony with our English version, assumes that David in his exile beyond the Jordan is recalling the blest days of festal worship in Jerusalem, and that this recollection at first thought embitters his grief, but at second thought suggests that his God is ever faithful and may be trusted even in these darkest hours, and will yet bring him back to the city and sanctuary of his early love.——A different construction, urged strongly by Alexander as the only one which "gives the future forms [of the verbs] their proper force instead of converting them into past tenses," translates thus: "These things I will remember and will pour out upon me my soul when I pass in the crowd, when I march with them up to the house of God," etc. That is, the whole verse is *anticipative*. He is thinking how he shall review these scenes of his exile when he shall once get back to the holy city and head its solemn processions to the sanctuary; thus: These things let me recall to mind and let me pour out my soul when I shall be moving on with the worshiping multitude to the house of God, etc. This construction is no doubt favored by the Hebrew tenses; but on the other hand it seems in point of sentiment unnatural and artificial. The first named construction supposes that during this exile David recalls the scenes of his past worship at Jerusalem; the second, that he is forecasting future scenes of worship there and thinking how pleasant it *will be then* to pour out his soul, *i. e.*, in thanksgiving for his deliverance. The great objection to the latter is that at this

stage of the Psalm he has not reached that point yet. It supposes him to be where he is not. In fact his soul is still cast down—is just at this point struggling up to catch the first ray of light and hope.

5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him *for* the help of his countenance.

The verb, "cast down," has the sense of being bowed low, almost if not altogether prostrated; while the form of the verb favors the reflexive sense—a self-produced effect: Why art thou breaking down thine own hopes and courage? Why indulge such self-depressing thoughts? The next words carry forward this view: Why such unrest? such inward anxiety? such lack of trust? Hope thou in God! Poetically the hopeful spirit accosts the desponding one, as if there were two conflicting hearts in his inner being; one lying prone in the dust, borne down in discouragement; the other lifting its eye upward; catching a glimpse of the faithful God; calling upon his fellow to take courage and still hope in God. ——"For the help of his countenance;" literally, for the *salvation of his face, i. e.*, for the salvation which his manifested presence will bring. Truly there is salvation in his presence! When his face shines upon us, we are already saved!

6. O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

Still depressed, the Psalmist addresses God directly, beautifully and most fitly laying open his whole case: "O my God, my soul is fearfully borne down with grief, depression; O let me remember thee from this far off land of the Jordan—from these mountains of Hermon. It avails me nothing to brood over my affliction, still turning my eye away from thee; let me rather turn toward thee, my God, and remember thee from this land of my exile.——The mountains of Hermon were the north-east boundary of Palestine entire, appearing in the history (Deut. 3: 8, 9, and 4: 48, and Josh. 12: 1.) The hill Mizar [the little] seems to have been a special locality in the Hermon range, marking perhaps more definitely the place of his rest at this time.

7. Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water-spouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

In the first clause it is not easy to determine the precise sense. Literally it stands, "Deep unto deep is calling to the voice of thy water-spouts;" "deep" being the word used (Gen. 1: 2) of the great mass of waters buried in darkness; also for the ocean masses of the deluge (Gen. 7: 4, and 8: 2); while the word for "water-spouts" occurs elsewhere but once (2 Sam. 5: 8), there translated "gutter," but obviously used with reference to the sound of rushing

waters. Whether the figure before the writer's mind is that of the surging billows of the sea, answering to each other in their perpetual succession, or the rushing of storm-clouds and aërial waterspouts, it is not easy to decide. It is clear however that the roaring and dashing of waters is before the mind and suggested the thought in the last clause: "All thy waves and thy billows sweep over me." I am as one in the bottom of the sea, sunk beneath the ever-dashing breakers. Wave after wave of trouble and turmoil break over me.

8. *Yet* the LORD will command his loving-kindness in the daytime, and in the night his song *shall be* with me, *and* my prayer unto the God of my life.

"Will command," *i. e.*, will commission his loving-kindness to manifest itself in my behalf. And I will praise him night and day, blending prayer with praise also continually to the God who is my life and on whom all the good of my life depends. This is the language of strong confidence and of overflowing gratitude.

9. I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

The meaning of this is plain, but in its moral attitude it seems to go to the outermost limit of propriety in calling upon God for the reasons of his course. Whoever should adopt these words into his own prayer must chasten his spirit to reverence and modest humility, remembering that God is great and pure, and never can do any thing amiss.

10. *As* with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where *is* thy God?

The bitterest ingredient in David's cup of grief during these scenes was the thought that his God was chastening him, and had withdrawn his favor *because of his sin.* That sad fall in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah was perhaps still recent, and his expulsion from his throne and from the holy city must have been bitterly suggestive, tearing open those half-healed wounds and causing him to live over again the contrition, the sorrows, and the despondencies which grew out of that group of sins. How truly the taunts of his foes—"Where is thy God now?"—must have been like a sword smiting through his very bones!

11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.

Again his faith rebukes his unbelief—the hopeful element in his soul, the desponding and despairing one: Hope thou still in thy God!——"The health of my countenance" repeats the lan-

guage of v. 5 save that here we have "*my* face" against "*thy* face" there.——"Health" is precisely the *salvations* of my face, *i. e.*, in thought *my Savior*, whose salvation will give me smiles for tears—the glow of joy in my countenance for these deep lines of woe.

PSALM XLIII.

Manifestly this Psalm is one of a pair with the preceding, and hence opens with no caption whatever. It might be considered a continuation. It will be seen that the strain of it is the same; the leading thoughts and phrases are here repeated.

1. Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

David implores God to judge between him and the conspirators (Absalom and his associates) who had risen up to wrest away his throne. He calls them a nation,* the word for a heathen power in array against God's people, but fitly applied to the conspirators here, for they were acting the part of a heathen force in arms against the Lord's anointed.——David speaks as one who felt that there was no help for him but in his God. This pending question as to the throne must be submitted to God's decision as the ultimate judge.

2. For thou *art* the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

"For all my strength is in thee." Forsaken of thee, my case is hopeless; personally, I am without strength.——Why hast thou left me to wander abroad, a sad mourner, by reason of these cruel oppressions of the enemy?

3. O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

"Thy light"—to chase away this darkness and to guide me in thy perfect way. "Thy truth," in the sense here of manifesting thy faithfulness in the fulfillment of promise. So guided all will be well.——The naming of Zion hill and the sacred tabernacle compels us to locate this Psalm during the time of David, and after the death of Saul, inasmuch as before this, there was no Zion hill, and after the very early years of Solomon, no tabernacle but a temple.

4. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

If once led back by God's kind hand to his throne, how joyfully would he hasten to the altar of God with his thank-offerings, even to that God who was his exultant joy, his joy of exultation, as the Hebrew implies. This strong language witnesses to the depth and fullness of his joy in God. Plainly he had strong emotions of soul and did not shun their proper expression.

5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, *who is* the health of my countenance, and my God.

Let this pair of beautiful Psalms suggest the blessedness of having such a God, the Refuge of our soul in trouble, the exceeding joy of our heart in the day of our deliverance! It is no mean occasion of thanksgiving that God gave his servant David such experiences and then caused them to be sent down to us in this sacred record for our example and edification. Let none of us fail to have like trust in God in the days of our affliction and equal joy and gratitude for the salvations of his presence!

PSALM XLIV.

This is one of those eleven Psalms over which in our English version we read, "For the sons of Korah," which were composed either *by* the sons of Korah or by David *for* their use. The general strain of this Psalm is clear, but the particular historic occasion is not certain. It is thought by some critics (*e. g.*, Hengstenberg, Keil, Delitzsch, Wordsworth) to refer to the same historic circumstances as Ps. 60, *i. e.*, to the severe conflicts connected with the conquest of Moab, Zobah, Syria, Ammon, and Edom, of which the history may be seen in 2 Sam. 8, and 1 Chron. 18. Obviously this Psalm has many points of resemblance with Ps. 60. But it seems to me to indicate more severe reverses, and a more depressed state of the Hebrew people than the history discloses at any time during the reign of David. It may therefore belong to the times of the later kings. Some have located it shortly before the captivity. It lacks the data for determining its historic time with certainty.——Of course if we locate it after David's time we assign it to some one of the sons of Korah as its author.

1. We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, *what* work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

2. *How* thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; *how* thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

3. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favor unto them.

It has come down to us by tradition from the fathers how thou, Lord, didst subdue the nations of Canaan by Joshua, drive them out, and plant thy people in their deserted cities and lands. It was not the sword of Israel nor their right arm that achieved these victories, but thine. In the time of this Psalm it was a joy to recall these wonderful works of the God of their fathers.

4. Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.

The Hebrew is emphatic: "Thou art *He*," [still] "my King," no less than theirs, O thou mighty God! Let thy decree go forth [again] for the salvation of Jacob.

5. Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

6. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

"Push down," as horned cattle with head and horns. As our fathers conquered with thy strength, not their own, so I will not trust in my bow, nor shall my own sword be my salvation.

7. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.

8. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name forever. Selah.

"All the day," not merely through all the hours of some one day, but continually—its parallel in the next clause being "forever."——"Selah" suggests a pause to dwell impressively upon this joyful and most wholesome thought.

9. But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.

10. Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.

Here is a sudden change in the tone of the song, indicating reverses, defeats; God's people forsaken of him, fleeing before their enemies and made a spoil. It does not appear how long this state of things continued or how severe these disasters were.

But the language in these and the following verses through v. 16 is certainly quite strong.

11. Thou hast given us like sheep *appointed* for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.

12. Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.

Thou hast suffered us to be devoured by our enemies as sheep slaughtered for the table. "Scattered us among the heathen" certainly seems to imply that some, not to say many, of the people had been taken captive in war. This may have been less than a captivity of the entire nation like that by the Chaldeans. "Sold" into the hand of their enemies indicated the defeat and subjection of Israel, as may be seen often in the history of the Judges (2: 14, and 3: 8, and 4: 2, etc.) See the same language Isa. 52: 3. The figure assumes that they were his property, his inheritance; to be alienated into the possession of other lords therefore only by sale.——The Psalmist expostulates with God, arguing that his wealth was not increased by the avails of this sale, this trading away of his covenant people. It inured only to the dishonor of his name.

13. Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.

14. Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.

15. My confusion *is* continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me.

16. For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

The Psalmist dwells long upon this thought: the reproach cast upon the well-known people of God by their victorious enemies. He seems to assume tacitly that this reproach must react against their God, as if it proved him too weak to deliver and to save.

17. All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.

18. Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;

19. Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.

It is not supposable that the Psalmist meant to say that his people had been faultless before God, for this would imply that God had forsaken and chastened them without cause. He might however say that they had not apostatized in such a degree as to forfeit their relation to God as his people. Their heart still turned

toward their God, sought his face, and recognized his covenant with them. On this ground he plead that God would not cast them off forever.——"Sore broken us," crushed us down, is the sense of the verb.——"In the place of dragons"—of course, a place fearfully desolate. The prophecies that predict the utter ruin of Babylon and of Edom describe them as the place for dragons and all most hideous and doleful creatures (Is. 13: 21, 22, and 34: 11–14, etc).——"Covered us with the shadow of death"—the deepest darkness, symbolic of extreme calamity.

20. If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;

21. Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

"Forgotten the name"—equivalent to forgetting God, for his name represents himself. To stretch out the hand to such a God is an act of worship, especially of prayer. See Ps. 28: 2. Surely God can not fail to take cognizance of such idolatry. No sin however secret can escape his eye.

22. Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

The word translated "Yea" is common in the sense of *for*, *because*, and logically connects this verse with those which precede v. 20, the thought being: We are indeed thy people still *for* we are perpetually slaughtered for thy sake. The evils we suffer are persecutions brought on us because we are thy people.——Paul (Rom. 8: 36) quotes it in this sense of Christian persecution. He found here not exactly a prophecy of his own times but words which well expressed the thing he would say.

23. Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? arise, cast *us* not off forever.

24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, *and* forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

25. For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.

26. Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

This earnest expostulation represents God's apparent inaction and forgetfulness as being asleep from which his people implore him to awake for their deliverance. They urge also the extremity of their sufferings and the honor of God's promised mercies This plea and argument would eminently befit the people of God or even any individual Christian in any scene of great affliction and depression.

PSALM XLV.

This Psalm deserves careful attention. The numerous points made in its caption indicate a high sense of its importance in the view of its compilers.——"To the chief musician" sets it apart for the service of the sanctuary and therefore precludes the idea of its being merely a nuptial song.——"Upon Shoshannim" is variously explained—of the musical instrument with which it should be accompanied; of the tune in which it should be sung; as the first words of some well known song which would suggest the tune for this. Far more probable than either of these explanations is that which translates, "*Concerning lilies*," with reference to the figurative use of the same word in the Song of Solomon (Song 2: 1, 2, 16, and 4: 5, and 5: 13, and 6: 2, 3, and 7: 2). See my Introduction to Notes on the Song, page 332. Lilies are a pertinent figure for women of beauty and purity—prominent personages in this Psalm.——"For the sons of Korah," here as in Ps. 42–44 and 46–49, either *to* or *for*; indicating either authorship or musical supervision. Inasmuch as this song stands in intimate relation to the Song of Solomon, and must have had Solomon himself as the ground-work of its imagery, it was probably written later than David's time and by some one of the sons of Korah. ——"Maschil," a didactic or instructive Psalm; having therefore a moral purpose far higher than mere amusement at a marriage festival.——"A song of the loved ones;" not merely a song about love, nor a loveable song, but a song concerning the beloved Messiah and his beloved bride. This construction is sustained by the manifest scope of the Psalm; by the unquestionable allusions in it to the Song of Solomon, and by the analogous and probably borrowed words of Isaiah (5: 1).*——That this Psalm is purely,

* The following paragraph from the Introduction to my Notes on the Song of Solomon (page 332, 333) is in place here.——"This Psalm (45) seems to have been built upon the Song of Solomon. It certainly contains a number of similar forms of expression which have altogether the appearance of being definite allusions. Thus in the caption of the Psalm, 'Upon Shoshannim,' *i. e.*, concerning lilies—the symbol of beautiful women. Now this is the very word used repeatedly in this as well as in its primary sense in the Song (2: 1, 2, 16, and 4: 5, and 5: 13, and 6: 2, 3, and 7: 2). ——Further the caption adds, '*A song of the loved ones*,' which also is a precise description of the Song of Solomon. Again, the subject of the Psalm is declared to be 'touching the king' (vs. 1, 5, 11, 13–15), to which point the Song of Solomon corresponds perfectly as may be seen in 1: 4, 12, and 7: 5.——This king (in the Psalm) receives the highest possible commendation for his beauty; v. 2, 'Thou art fairer than the children of men'—which only reproduces the whole scope of the Song, *e. g.*, 5: 10. 'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.'——A special point is made of 'grace of lips'—useful and attractive speech. The phrase in the Psalm is, 'Grace is poured into thy lips' (v. 2): in the Song—'His lips like lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh: his mouth is most sweet, yea, he is altogether lovely' (5: 13, 16). Again, the reference (Ps. 45: 7) to this king's companions ['fellows'] gives us in the Hebrew

thoroughly Messianic has been the doctrine of those who have held the word of God in hand and in honor throughout all the ages. The Chaldee Targum on v. 2 has this: "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, is greater than of the sons of men." With this the oldest Jewish Rabbis accord.——The voice of the early Christian church may be given in the words of Theodoret: "This is a Psalm for the beloved, *i. e.*, for the beloved Son of God."——The writer to the Hebrews gives his emphatic indorsement by quoting vs. 6, 7 entire as the words of God to his Son (1: 8, 9). "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," etc. The superlative beauty of this King is in the *grace of his lips:* he is the oracle of God to man; "never man spake like this man." He came from heaven to earth to bring us words from God and therefore is significantly called, The *Word.* He rides forth in majesty, not because of personal beauty, or martial prowess, or muscular strength, or majestic mien, but "because of truth, meekness, and righteousness." It is because he loves righteousness and hates wickedness that his God anoints him, *i. e.*, makes him his Anointed One, the true Messiah, far above all other anointed kings of the Theocracy. And finally, his children are to be princes in all the earth (v. 16), and his name shall be remembered through all generations, himself an object of praise from all the people forever and ever. Verily no personage less than Jesus the Messiah is here, King of kings and Lord of lords, "his kingdom an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion that which knows no end."——Still the Messianic argument is not exhausted, for new elements appear in the facts quite peculiar to this prophecy, *e. g.*, that here the Messiah is a bridegroom; his bride is a prominent personage; she is counseled to forsake father and mother and cleave to the King her "Lord." A new family is constituted; the fruits thereof are children to be "made princes in all the wide earth"—when "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ." The germ of this idea lies in the Song of Solomon, there more ex-

the same word which occurs twice in the Song (1: 7, and 8: 13). 'The flocks of thy companions;' 'the companions hearken to thy voice.'—— The bridal procession is prominent in both the Song (3: 6–11) and the Psalm (vs. 14, 15). The Queen is adorned with surpassing splendor in the Psalm (v. 9): 'Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.' 'The King's daughter is all glorious within' (v. 13). The entire strain of the Song is the same, *e. g.*, 4: 9–11, with all which may be compared Rev. 19: 7, 8—'His wife hath made herself ready;' 'arrayed in fine linen, clean and white.'——A very specific point is the mention in both of 'myrrh and aloes;' in the Psalm v. 8; in the Song, 4: 14—a combination found nowhere else in the Bible.——Resemblances so numerous, so apparently undesigned, and at once so general, covering the scope and drift of each composition, and yet so minute, reaching to the definite points of costume and drapery, seem to justify us fully in the conclusion that the Psalm is precisely the Song over again—the Song condensed, simplified, its religious significance and practical bearings brought out more distinctly, and the whole adapted to public worship in the sanctuary —set to music."

panded and diffuse than here; enlarged to gather in more points of oriental beauty; here put in convenient form for the musical service of the sanctuary.* It scarcely need be added that this allegorical conception which compared the covenant relation of God with Israel to human marriage and which made her Maker her husband and herself the bride, appears continually in the Old Testament Prophets subsequently to the date of these compositions (Song of Solomon and Ps. 45), and also throughout the New Testament no less. (See Isa. 54: 5, and 62: 4, 5; Jer. 3: 1; Ezek. 16 and 23; Mat. 9: 15, and 22: 2, and 25: 1, and John 3: 29, and 2 Cor. 11: 2, and Eph. 5: 25–32, and Rev. 19: 7, and 21: 2, and 22: 17.)——Comprehensively then we may say, the argument for the Messianic reference of this Psalm lacks none of the usual points of evidence, while it has some in extraordinary fullness and force. It applies aptly to the Messiah in every particular; it refuses to adapt itself to any other personage; its reference to the Messiah is abundantly confirmed by the fact that the symbol of marriage to illustrate the relation of the Messiah to his people, starting with this Psalm and the Song of Solomon, runs through all the Scriptures subsequently written, developed strongly in the New Testament as having special reference to Christ and his church; and finally it is quoted by an inspired Apostle (Heb. 1: 7, 8) in a way which peremptorily demands its original reference to the Messiah and to him only.

1. My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the King: my tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

"Is inditing," but in the original, with more beauty and force; "My heart boils up [and overflows] with a good thing." My emotions are stirred to their depths with ravishing thoughts of the glorious King and his beautiful bride. "I am to utter the song I have prepared concerning the King; my tongue is the pen of a swift writer," for my heart is so full of thoughts, rich and beautiful, I have only to open my lips and they pour forth fast as the most rapid pen can write them. A wonderful exordium truly, indicating the profound interest which filled and stirred the soul of this poet-prophet.

2. Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee forever.

Thou art *exceeding fair* above the sons of men—the verb being in a specially emphatic form. The point of superlative beauty is the *lips* considered as organs of speech, for the reference to "truth" (v. 6) and to moral qualities generally, and especially to

* These points are discussed much more fully in my Introduction to Notes on the Song of Solomon.

the use of truth as a moral power for the subjugation of his enemies, shows this to be the thing intended here. This may remind us of the corresponding testimonies borne of Jesus during his earthly life: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (John 1: 14); "They wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth;" "Never man spake like this man."——Therefore, because of his mission of heavenly truth from God to men; because he came to reveal God in words and forms so perfect and so precious; "therefore God hath blessed thee forever." His work fully meets the approval of the Father; it perfectly ensures the Father's blessing to the end of its absolute success and final triumph over all the powers of darkness and sin.

3. Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* Mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.

4. And in thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

The martial genius of the age of David appears in this figure, the sword girded on the thigh; and yet the glory of this King marching forth in triumph, lies not in routed armies and heaps of the slain; not in cities laid desolate, wives made widows, and children fatherless; but in "truth, meekness, and righteousness." He comes to bring to men most blessed truth concerning their Great Father; to turn them from darkness, delusion, and crime, to light, truth, and love.——"Thou Mighty One;" but Isaiah has it, "The Mighty God" (9: 6)—possibly borrowing from this very passage.——"Glory" and "Majesty" are terms frequently and most legitimately used of the surpassing qualities of the Infinite God—not out of place therefore, when said of his equal Son.——"Ride prosperously" is made in the Hebrew idiom with two imperative verbs: "prosper;" "ride."——"Thy right hand shall guide thee" to wondrous achievements and results—this being the sense of the original verb. Sentiment: Thy glorious qualities shall insure thee magnificent success—such success as will make profound impressions of reverence and awe ["terrible things"], but not "terrible" in the sense of appalling, undesirable, but rather of being impressive, producing a deep sensation, commanding the admiring awe of the universe.

5. Thine arrows *are* sharp in the heart of the King's enemies; *whereby* the people fall under thee.

The Hebrew words stand in this order: "Thine arrows are sharp; people under thee shall fall; in the heart of the enemies of the King;" the last clause being an after-thought appended, to which the word "sharp" should be prefixed—Yea, sharp are they "in the very heart of the King's enemies." The writer to the Hebrews (4: 12) perhaps borrows and then expands: "For the word of

God is sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit." The power of truth subdues hearts most stubborn; humbles hearts most proud.

6. Thy throne, O God, *is* forever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom *is* a right scepter.

7. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Here note (1) that the Messiah is addressed *as God*. This is really the case in v. 7 as well as in v. 6. "Therefore, O God, hath thy God anointed thee," etc. This is repeated by Isaiah (9: 6): "His name shall be called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.——(2) His throne is eternal; forever and ever. Other kingdoms, the mightiest and proudest ever reared by mortals, are transient; the face of the world is strown with their ruins; but this kingdom shall never collapse; no chronicler in the ages never so distant shall have to speak of its fall; no explorer shall traverse and survey its ruins.——(3) Beautifully it shall be thus enduring and imperishable *because it is righteous:* "the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter." "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; *therefore*, O God, hath thy God anointed thee with joy" more than any of thy associate kings on the throne of Israel from whom the Messiah is thought of as coming forth. Precisely this is the strain of argument in Isaiah 11: 1–9; "the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him;" "he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes;" "with righteousness shall he judge the poor;" "with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked;" *therefore* men "shall not hurt nor destroy in all this holy mountain," etc. The Infinite God is committed to the interests of righteousness, purity, love, and the highest blessedness of the beings he has created; *therefore* the King who rules to the certain accomplishment of these grand results shall reign with assured prosperity—a reign that never can end. Shall not the Great God be praised for this?

8. All thy garments *smell* of myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

The anointing with oil as in the previous verse suggests perfumery as here. "Myrrh, aloes, and cassia *are* all thy garments," *i. e.*, they are all perfumed with these sweet spices. These identical spices are named in the Song of Solomon in this combination; not elsewhere in scripture.——All thy garments, or perhaps the implied wearers, come forth out of palaces ornamented with ivory, from which also they have gladdened thee, such ornamentation and perfumery being in place on such joyful occasions.

9. Kings' daughters *were* among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

"Honorable women," maids of honor; the virgins whose presence graced the marriage solemnities. The magnificence of this scene is heightened by the circumstance that these maids of honor are daughters of kings, themselves princesses of exalted rank.—— "Upon the right hand," the post of honor, stood the queen, the bride herself. "In gold of Ophir," not, as some have thought, clad in solid gold, but in garments ornamented with gold—the precise manner of ornamentation being to us a point of no account.

10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

11. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he *is* thy Lord; and worship thou him.

The bride of the great King having now been introduced, the song turns suggestively from adornment and etiquette to moral counsels, matters of real and truly surpassing importance. Shall this bride acquit herself worthily of her new responsibilities, as befits one so highly honored?——"Hearken;" bend thine ear; consider well and be not fascinated with these splendors to the neglect of the sacred duties of this new relation.——"O daughter"—for these suggestive words come from one who speaks as thy father, and therefore should be heard with filial, daughterly affection.——"Forget thine own people and the house of thy father," with tacit allusion to that great law of the marriage relation, that a man shall leave father and mother, and the woman also no less, to constitute a new family. (Gen. 2: 24). So the bride of Christ should expel from her heart all her old and earthly loves, to give a pure and a whole heart to her affianced Lord, entering upon this new relation with a radically changed heart and life, old things passing away, and all things, all affections, all the heart's love, and all the soul's real life, made new. So shall the King greatly desire thy beauty; so thou mayest become sure of his love. Such beauty of soul is forever precious in his eyes. He is thy Lord, thy husband—to be accepted with the sincerest love and obedience of thy heart. Worship thou him with the reverence, esteem, and love of a true wife, and even more as he is more than a human husband; higher far than the ideal husband with whom in this figurative, illustrative conception, he is compared.

12. And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift; *even* the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.

"The daughter of Tyre," the richest of the nations, with gifts shall conciliate thy favor. Here as in Isa. 60: 5–17, and 49: 18–23, and Ps. 72: 10, the sentiment is that in the fullness of the

Messianic times, the wealth of the nations shall be cheerfully laid at his feet. In the days of Solomon, Tyre represented the wealth of the world. Hence her name is specified here.——The word for "entreat" demands a broader signification; they shall bring presents to conciliate thy good will. They shall make humble submission to thee as their supreme and willingly accepted Lord and king.

13. The King's daughter *is* all glorious within: her clothing *is* of wrought gold.

"The King's daughter" means here the new bride. "Glorious within"—*i. e.*, within her palace, as you see her from without, sitting opposite the door. Her clothing is variegated, ornamented with gold.

14. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

15. With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the King's palace.

The virgins, her companions, are prominent here, brought in with gladness and joy to become (must we not assume?) permanent members of this royal household, and therefore aptly representing the Gentile nations introduced with joyful welcome into the great family of the Messiah. This sentiment is taken up and expanded with most glowing imagery by Isaiah (49: 6–23 and 60).

16. Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

"Instead of thy fathers," to share thy heart and thy house, shall now and henceforth be thy sons, to be made princes in all the earth; for "the kingdoms of the world are to become thy kingdoms," and thou shalt make thy sons "kings and priests unto God." The figure seizes upon the highest earthly honor and prosperity to represent the future enlargement and the benign world-wide sway of the Messiah's kingdom.

17. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee forever and ever.

"Thy name remembered in all generations;" the name of Jesus known in all the earth, held in honor and love by all the nations; one Lord and his name one; the idols utterly perished; Satan's throne prostrate and his very name forgotten; Jesus, the pure, the lovely and Glorious One, the sole object of worship and praise thenceforth and onward forever—such is the consummation of this wonderful prophecy! Will there not be joy above and joy below, joy among the holy in heaven and joy among the living of earth,

when this "consummation so devoutly to be wished" shall become too real to be any longer doubted—shall be truly the glory of earth as well as the glory of heaven!

PSALM XLVI.

All the points in this Psalm accord admirably with the times of Hezekiah when God interposed for his people as their refuge and strength in times of deepest trouble, and when the proud Assyrian whose tramp shook the nations was suddenly smitten, and the daughters of Zion rejoiced in the God of their salvation. We can not affirm with absolute certainty that this Psalm was written on that occasion. It may suffice to say, nothing forbids that date and occasion; every point is finely adapted to the circumstances of that time; and we get a more vivid and life-like sense of the Psalm if we connect it with those historic events.——It was consigned to the Chief Musician for his use in the service of song in the house of the Lord; written by some of the sons of Korah; and set to female voices—such being the best approved sense of the words, "Upon Alamoth." We may think of it as the national song of victory, or rather of *triumph in God*, celebrating not so much the prowess of arms, the courage of heroes, the terrible execution of the enginery of war, as the might of Israel's God.

1. God *is* our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

2. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

3. *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled, *though* the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

The first words strike the key-note of this thrilling song—God, the refuge and the strength of his prayerful, trusting people. It was in times of deepest trouble that he was found their help, exceedingly—this being the precise expression in the song. Therefore will we never fear [through all the future ages] though the earth be displaced and the mountains be agitated in the heart of the seas, *i. e.*, by such an earthquake as would uptear the deeply buried mountains and toss the ocean-waters heaven high; though the waters thereof roar and foam. These figures—the ocean boiling as a huge caldron—every mountain shaking to its deep foundations—represent the great nations of the East as thrown into extreme agitation by this Assyrian invasion. The kingdom of the ten tribes on the north of Judah, had already fallen; a terrible onslaught was now being made upon Judah. In military strength, to human view, she was powerless to withstand the Conqueror of the Eastern world. Rela

tively to her adversaries she was utterly weak, save in one single point; she had the Almighty God on her side!——"Selah;" pause and comtemplate the scene! Think how safe we were in God our Refuge, and how safe we shall be through all the future ages with such a Refuge ever at hand in our deepest need!

4. *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy *place* of the tabernacles of the Most High.

One of the boasts of Assyria's king was this: "With the sole of my foot have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places" (Isa. 37: 25); implying, it would seem, that he expected to subdue Jerusalem by cutting off its supply of water. But the resources of the Almighty withstood him at this point, providing a river whose streams should forever gladden the city of God. Water being one of the necessities of life, a river becomes a fit symbol of rich and unfailing supply. Eden was not complete without one; the heavenly paradise rejoices in its "river of the water of life, clear as crystal." Water in amount as a river proceeding from under the temple, became the symbol in Ezekiel's hand for the redeeming power of gospel light and love over the sins and desolations of this fallen world (Ezek. 47: 1–12). Perhaps the germ of this common symbol is here.

5. God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, *and that* right early.

If the question be asked, What is the security for these blessings upon Zion? here is the answer: "*God is in the midst of her;*" his earthly dwelling-place is there; the home of his temple; the place of his visible presence. This is all the guarantee we need. God will surely help her, as the Hebrew has it—"at the dawn of the morning"—at the turning point from night to day. "Weeping may endure for a night" for the people must needs feel their dependence upon their God and give themselves to prayer. Then, once humbled and fully cast upon God for help, he surely comes.

6. The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

7. The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

The song recurs again to the scenes of terror—the formidable powers combined against the holy city—to bring to view once more the effect of God's glorious interposition. Just then the awful voice of God was heard; the earth melted; all hostile forces quailed before him. This proves that the Lord of Hosts, God of the armies of heaven, Monarch of the heavenly worlds, is on our side—at once the God of heaven and the God of Jacob; he is our refuge! Why should we fear?——"Selah!" Think of this wonder-working God, the unfailing strength and succor of his people!

8. Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

9. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

Once more, come and see what God hath wrought! Mark what desolations he hath spread over the earth! Think of that vast host, the pride and glory of Great Assyria: how suddenly are they fallen! Their wars of conquest and terror are at an end; their war-weapons broken; the chariots of their pride burned in the fire. How are they smitten!

10. Be still, and know that I *am* God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

11. The LORD of hosts *is* with us; the God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

"Be still"—addressed to those hostile nations; desist from your vain endeavors against my people; know ye that I am God, the Almighty, against whom no human power can stand. "I will be exalted among all the nations—over all the earth!" Of this glorious purpose, those events in the age of Hezekiah were at once a proof and a prophecy—a demonstration for the time then present; and God's own word for the perpetual ascendency of his name and glory over all the earth, through all the coming ages! ——The joyous refrain of the song brings it fitly to its close. This glorious Lord of Hosts dwells among us, the God of his own people ["Jacob"] and their everlasting refuge.

PSALM XLVII.

Most obviously this Psalm celebrates some victory in which God had signally subdued Gentile nations before his people Israel. The tone of it throughout is that of exulting triumph and high praises to the God of their salvation. It lacks the data for determining with certainity its historic occasion, and yet its points harmonize so well with the events recorded 2 Chron. 20, as to justify us in assuming its reference to those events. On that occasion Moab, Ammon, and Edom, had combined their formidable hosts for the invasion of Judah. They had crept round the southern extremity of the Dead Sea [see the line of their path identified in Robinson's Biblical Researches, vol. 2: 214, 215], and coming northward along its western shore had reached Engedi ["Hazezon Tamar"] when the tidings of their approach in such force were brought to Jehoshaphat. He saw and felt the danger; despaired of help elsewhere than in God; and forthwith "proclaimed a fast throughout Judah" (v. 3). All Judah came together; and there, while they

stood before the Lord with their little ones, their wives and their children (v. 13), God's word dropped upon them through his prophet; "Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours but God's" (v. 15); "*Ye* shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves; stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem; fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go ye out against them; for the Lord will be with you" (v. 17).——Even so they went forth with the song of battle and victory on their lips, saying, "Praise the Lord, for his mercy endureth for ever" (v. 21). Then the Lord directed ambushments to be set against this host; they were smitten; then they fought each other and fell with an immense slaughter. After three days spent in gathering the spoil, on the fourth the hosts of Judah assembled in the valley of Berachah [blessing] and there they blessed the Lord with songs of praise for his redeeming mercy in saving his people and destroying their enemies. To that occasion this Ps. 47 would have been eminently appropriate. Then they went up to Jerusalem and there again they celebrated this wonderful deliverance, probably in the use of the Psalm next succeeding this, Ps. 48.——In addition to the happy adaptation of these songs of praise and triumph to the circumstances of that scene, we have the historic fact that the children of the Korhites ["Sons of Korah"] "stood up there, prominent in that song, to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high,' (v. 19). All in all it was a wonderful deliverance. God's hand was in it: indeed God's hand was *all;* other hands were practically nothing. His people were there, praying, humbling their souls before him and imploringly trustful;—all the rest was God—God in the greatness of his power and in the fullness of his loving care for his people.——Such was the historic occasion with which we have good reason for assuming this Psalm to be identified. At every point we shall see its pertinence to this occasion.

1. O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

It would be at once most appropriate and most sublime to see the whole assembled nation—the fathers, the mothers, the sons, and the daughters of Judah, all in concert clap their hands and shout unto God with the voice of triumph, *i. e.*, the loud shout of joyous exultation.

2. For the LORD most high *is* terrible; *he is* a great King over all the earth.

3. He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

"For Jehovah, Most High"—he who is at once our own covenant-keeping God [Jehovah] and the supremely great and glorious One, *is to be feared*—terrible to his foes; Lord of all the earth. We are sure he *will* subdue all the nations under us, for what he

has done before our eyes proves both his power and his prompt readiness to do so.

4. He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

"Choose our inheritance for us" is to do again what he did in covenant with Abraham and in fulfillment through Joshua, *i. e.*, give us Canaan and plant us securely therein. To preserve them from being driven out by the combined forces of their adjacent enemies, was equivalent to replanting them in their own promised land.——"Selah;" pause and dwell upon the marvelous loving-kindness of the Lord our God.

5. God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

"Gone up." Having been down to do battle for us and having gained this complete victory, leaving nothing more for us to desire and having nothing more for himself to do, what should come next but his glorious ascending to his throne in the heavens? Let him ascend therefore with shouts of triumph, amid the pæans of victory!

6. Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

7. For God *is* King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

God has shown himself King of all the earth; extol him therefore with highest praises.——This word for "sing" implies the joint use of voice and instrument. The word translated "with understanding" is that which stands at the head of so many Psalms in the sense to instruct—for instruction—of course meaning here, perform a "Maschil;" sing a Psalm for instruction, *i. e.*, one which sets forth these most instructive views of the glory, power, and loving care of our Great God.

8. God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

9. The princes of the people are gathered together, *even* the people of the God of Abraham: for the shields of the earth *belong* unto God: he is greatly exalted.

God has begun to reign over the heathen; has seated himself upon his high throne as King of nations—of which we have the evidence in the wonderful victory we this day celebrate. Already the poet-prophet sees the glorious consummation of God's future gospel triumphs, saying: "for the princes of the people"—the noble-hearted, those high in power over the heathen nations—gather themselves together *as* the people of the God of Abraham, *i. e.*, as being such; or without the word "as," we may translate, *being* the people of the God of Abraham.——"For the shields," the

great protectors of the earth, belong of right to God; he is exalted high above them all and they are only his servants.——The thought in these verses is put by John (Rev. 11 : 15) in the sublime words—"The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ and he shall reign forever and ever." Should it surprise us that such a victory as that wrought before the eyes of Jehoshaphat and of his praying, worshiping people should suggest this grandly sublime result of the gospel age and of its wonderful appliances and forces for human salvation?

PSALM XLVIII.

It was said in the introduction to Ps. 47 that this Psalm stands in close relations to that, and therefore was probably written on the same general occasion, viz.: the victory of Jehoshaphat over the combined forces of Moab, Ammon, and Edom, narrated 2 Chron. 20. This is rendered the more probable because the history provides for two special celebrations of that victory; one in the valley of blessing [Berachah] (2 Chron. 20: 26), and the other on their arrival at Jerusalem (vs. 27, 28) to which they came "with psalteries and harps and trumpets into the house of the Lord." As Ps. 47 is in every point adapted to the former of these celebrations, so is this to the latter. I shall therefore assume that the Psalm was composed for that occasion and shall interpret accordingly.

1. Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.

By this wonderful overthrow of the enemies of Judah, the Lord had shown himself to be both great and worthy of the highest praises possible to mortals. It was specially appropriate that he should be thus praised "*in the city of our God, in his holy mountain*," because this was the city which his interposing arm had saved from capture and destruction. Full of the fresh joy of this scene, the hosts of Judah thronged the temple with loudest songs of praise to God for this deliverance.

2. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount Zion, *on* the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

3. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

Did Mount Zion ever look more fair to those enraptured eyes? Only a few hours ago in danger of war, siege, capture, conflagration, utter destruction; now standing *saved*, untouched, in more than its former glory;—we need not wonder then that her joyful sons and daughters should sing: "Beautiful for elevation, the joy of all the land" [perhaps prospectively of all the "*earth*"] "is this our Mount Zion," especially as seen from the north; the city

honored as the home and throne of the Great King! In her palaces we have known and proved our God to be our Refuge. In our danger we sought him—not in vain!

4. For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.

5. They saw *it, and* they marveled; they were troubled. *and* hasted away.

6. Fear took hold upon them there, *and* pain, as of a woman in travail.

7. Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

"Lo;" behold these facts of our history; think how the kings of the south and of the east gathered their hosts and came upon us; but all suddenly they passed away together. They came near enough to see the towers of our glorious city [perhaps from the heights of Tekoa; see Robinson's Researches, vol. 2: p. 182, 183] but in a moment, panic-smitten, confounded, thrown into inextricable confusion, they fell upon each other in deadly conflict and fled in consternation. It was as when the typhoons of the east shatter to atoms the huge ships of Tarshish.——The facts of this history stand in these words: "When they began to sing and to praise, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir which were come against Judah; and they were smitten. For the children of Ammon stood up against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy them; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another. And when Judah came unto the watch-tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitudes, and behold they were dead bodies, fallen to the earth and none escaped" (2 Chron. 20: 22–24). So perished those hosts of Zion's enemies!

8. As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it forever. Selah.

We had heard with our ears of the glorious victories of Zion's God over her foes in the ages past; but now our eyes have seen. Now we have another, even a fresh demonstration that God will establish his kingdom forever. When his people put their trust in him and seek his help in humble prayer and fasting, he can not let them fall before their enemies. Their salvation, committed humbly to his hand, is forever sure.——"Selah;" think of this and lay it up in your hearts, ye people of God, throughout all the ages.

9. We have thought of thy loving-kindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

"Have thought of thy loving-kindness;" the Hebrew word suggesting the idea of *comparison;* we have thought of it in the light of this wonderful illustration—the recent overthrow of our enemies.

10. According to thy name, O God, so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.

"Thy names," *e. g.*, the Mighty One; the One exalted Most High; the ever faithful and changeless One; have ever brought before us thy glorious qualities of being and of character. So shall thy praise be according to what thou art. Thou shall be praised to the very ends of the earth according to thine infinite worth. Thy right hand doeth all righteous things—is full of righteous achievements, as we have seen in this destruction of our wicked enemies.

11. Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

"Daughters of Judah" may perhaps mean in this connection the suburban villages in a manner dependent for protection upon the mother city. This usage appears Josh. 15: 45, 47, in a prosaic geographical statement. But the more obvious construction refers it to the mothers and their female offspring who had special occasion to dread the horrors of war. Let them, therefore, be foremost in these thank-offerings of praise to God for his righteous judgments in destroying their enemies.

12. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.

13. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell *it* to the generation following.

14. For this God *is* our God forever and ever: he will be our guide *even* unto death.

The sweetly solemn and joyous thought that Zion still stands unharmed, only the more beautiful for the recent danger and the now assured safety which re-indorses her everlasting security in God, seems to prompt the words before us. Walk all round about our Zion. Note every tower in its place, every bulwark in its full strength, all her palaces in their untarnished glory. Mark all this, and then send it down to coming generations to bear witness all along the ages that the God who hath wrought all this for us is our own God forever and ever; who will guide us in safety and crown us with blessings even unto death; long as there shall be people who trust him and need his protecting care for their continued salvation.

PSALM XLIX.

This Psalm, ascribed to some one of the sons of Korah as its author, is not apparently an outgrowth of any special historical occasion, but like Ps. 37 deduces its moral instruction from a large

class of facts manifest in common life. Its moral purpose is to set forth the vanity of wealth and its utter lack of power against death, and by implication, against any of the greater evils of human life. Over against the emptiness of riches toward meeting these vital wants of man stand the fullness and glory of God's love and protection for his trusting people.

1. Hear this, all *ye* people; give ear, all *ye* inhabitants of the world:

2. Both low and high, rich and poor, together.

The Psalm opens by calling the attention of all people, of every possible rank in life. The Hebrew language has two very unlike words for *man;* one drawn from the *earth*, and significant of frailty; the other significant of his relative strength and nobility. Both are brought together here: man, the low; and man, the high. This distinction is germain to the present theme; an admonition to the rich and the nobly-born, suggesting that they forbear to set undue value on wealth and honor, and a comfort to the poor of humble origin, inasmuch as the more enduring good of God's favor and love are free to their choice and fully within their attainment.

3. My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart *shall be* of understanding.

4. I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark sayings upon the harp.

"Wisdom" and "understanding" have here the meaning common in the Proverbs of Solomon, practical sound sense in the choice of the highest and best good of life, viz., God's favor and love—far above all the glittering, fallacious treasures of earth.——"I will incline mine ear;" but why should a *writer* say this? One who writes or speaks may fitly desire the inclined, attentive ear of his hearers or readers; but what has he to do with inclining his own ear to a parable or to any hearing whatever?——The answer is: If you think of this author as giving his own thought without inspiration from God, you must say, he inclines his ear to the dictates of his own judgment, or to the fancies of his own imagination; but if you have reason to account him inspired, then, that he bends his ear with atttentive docility to the voice divine that speaks within. The present case is of the latter sort.——"My dark saying," translates a Hebrew word which primarily means a riddle, an enigma; and then passes into the sense of poetry, a composition to be sung with perhaps a musical accompaniment as here.——To "open" is not here to begin, but to unfold, to set forth clearly.

5. Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, *when* the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

The writer, speaking for others as well as himself, represents one who is the object of malicious persecution from men of rank and wealth. "But why should I fear in these days of my affliction

when the iniquity of my ensnarers, the malicious schemes of those who would ensnare my heels, environs me round about? for these rich men have at best but small power." "Of my heels," is sufficiently literal, but comes far short of giving the true sense. The writer does not speak of the agency of his *own* heels, much less of their agency as being wicked. He is describing those who waylaid his feet, or as we might say *dogged* his heels from behind; set upon him with dark, malicious intent to trip, cast down, and destroy.

6. They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

7. None *of them* can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:

8. (For the redemption of their soul *is* precious, and it ceaseth forever:)

9. That he should still live forever, *and* not see corruption.

With all his wealth not a man of them can redeem his brother from death and the grave! They may have unbounded trust in their riches, they may make any amount of display of their abundant wealth, and may *shine* before the eyes of men [so the Hebrew word for "boast" implies]; but God will by no means accept their gold as a ransom from the grave. Such redemption of the soul [life] is *costly* (better than "precious"); it costs too much for them to pay in gold. No rubies can equal it; no millionaire can raise money enough to buy off his soul from the exacting demand of Death. "It ceaseth forever"—rather, one desists from the effort forever, or he utterly and forever fails to make up an adequate ransom, and therefore all hope of success perishes forever. The former seems to be more precisely the sense of the original: man must give over the effort in eternal despair! The richest of men will not, can not, live forever so as not to see the corruptions of the grave. The words ascribed to a dying queen are in point here: "Millions of money for one inch of time!"

10. For he seeth *that* wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

11. Their inward thought *is*, *that* their houses *shall continue* forever, *and* their dwelling-places to all generations; they call *their* lands after their own names.

"*For*," assigns a reason for accepting the truth previously stated. Every observer of human life will see that the rich, whether wise or foolish, die and are compelled to leave their hoarded wealth to others. It matters not how wise they may have been, nor on the other hand how foolish or even brutish: all alike must in their time go down to the grave and leave their riches to others. They may have inwardly thought that their houses would

stand forever, and they may have tacitly assumed that their own life would be as permanent as their earthly mansions. They may have even given their own names to their estates and magnificent establishments; but, alas! even this insures no perpetuity to their own frail life. So perish all man's vain hopes of an earthly immortality! A few days or years only, and he is numbered with the dead, and the places that knew him once shall know him no more!

12. Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts *that* perish.

13. This their way *is* their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

Although their inner thought assumes for themselves an indefinitely long life, and they give their own names to their homes as if they were to dwell there for ages, yet they abide not, even for a night; theirs is but the life of a day. Much as they were honored for the moment (for wealth gives men a certain distinction), yet as to their hold on life, they are like the beasts; they soon perish. The verb translated "abideth" means strictly, to stay over night. "Beasts" is the usual word for domestic cattle, often brought suddenly from the stall to the slaughter. Or if the word should include beasts in general, yet their life-term is brief and is referred to as being so.——"This is their way and their folly"—their "way" in the sense of their course of life; and their "folly" with reference to the groundless and ruinous assumption they make as to long life and permanent prosperity. This word for "folly" has the sense primarily of *hope;* next, of hopes cherished without reason, presumptuously, foolishly—as here.——Yet despite of their folly and of the perpetual frustration of their hopes and assumptions, their followers still approve their principles and consequently hold fast to the same delusions.——The Hebrew word for "posterity" need not be restricted to their offspring; nor does it embrace all their survivors: but should rather be taken in the sense of their admirers who have deemed them fortunate men while they lived, yet give no heed to the lessons which Wisdom would draw from their early death and their utter failure to reach the true ends of life.——Let the reader note how true to the human nature and life of to-day are these records of the life and thought of the rich and worldly men of twenty-five hundred years ago.—— "Selah;" let this be thought of deeply and laid to heart.

14. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

Shepherd-life supplies the figures in the first two clauses. Men put them in the grave like sheep, *i. e.*, as they drive sheep in flocks

to the slaughter; Death shall be their shepherd, taking them in charge as the shepherd does his flock. This seems to be the precise sense of the Hebrew verb and its pronoun. They are as sheep, both in their wholesale slaughter, and in their falling under the control of Death, conceived of as the monarch of the myriads of the dead.——The upright shall tread over their fresh graves "in the morning," for their pleasure-life has been said (v. 12) not to outlast the night. Soon therefore as the morning comes, they are in their graves; and the upright, no longer persecuted by their rich and proud oppressors, now tread over their fresh graves with a keen sense of God's swift retribution upon the wicked.——"Their beauty" [literally their *form*, all that was mortal] shall be for Sheol [the grave] to consume—they being far away from their earthly dwellings. This paraphrase assumes an allusion in the word "dwelling" to those "dwelling-places" which they vainly dreamed would endure "to all generations" (v. 11). Now they are driven from those to far other habitations.——These last words of the verse—"from their dwellings"—are felt by all critics to be difficult, mainly, it would seem, because the sentence is so very elliptical. But assuming a reference to v. 11 we have a fair and an exceedingly impressive sense both for this clause and for the entire verse. These men, wicked, proud, and rich, are hurried in throngs, like sheep, from their splendid palaces and magnificent estates into the dark and dismal grave—Death their shepherd there. Corruption quickly mars their beauty. The earthly homes they built for immortality are their dwelling-places no longer.

15. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

God and he only will redeem my soul from the hand of Sheol; for he will take me, *i. e.*, to himself. No such state awaits me in the under-world as awaits the ungodly; for my God will take me to his own mansions. The force of the first Hebrew word "only" is quite left out in the English version. It is a thought too precious to be missed. God alone; no other arm save his; I know no other; I trust none other; God by his own divine arm will redeem my soul from the death-power of Sheol, and from his dominion, compared just before to that of the shepherd controlling his sheep.

16. Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased.

17. For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

When one becomes rich fear not his power; envy not his prosperity; aspire not after the increasing glory of his house, for when he dieth not one thing of all he had can he take away with him. His glory shall not go down to Sheol after him, *i. e.*, to meet

and rest upon him there. Ah no; he goes down to the grave more than empty; worse than naked.

18. Though while he lived he blessed his soul, (and *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.)

19. He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

Though long as he lives he will think himself blest with all that heart can wish, perpetually flattered as a prosperous and happy man, for men will praise thee if thou doest well for thyself—if thou takest supreme care of thine own worldly interests, even to the piling up of great estates. Yet this man must go to the generation of his fathers, dying like mortal men. None of them shall ever see the joyous light of a true prosperity.

20. Man *that is* in honor, and understandeth not, is like the beasts *that* perish.

No matter how high in honor or how full of riches, yet if he lack understanding; if he lives the fool; if he builds his earthly palace for immortality, saying: 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; now take thine ease and be merry, and let God be forgotten, he is like the beasts that perish. His God-given intelligence, his reason and conscience—divinest gifts of heaven—have utterly failed to lift him above the earthly life of the brutes. He goes to his grave as they to theirs—save that he has some *fearful elements in his account before God* which can never enter into their lot.——On two distinct occasions, both recorded by Luke (12: 16-21, and 16: 19-31) Jesus spake of the rich sinner in a strain remarkably analogous to that of this Psalm, and almost without doubt, with these words in his mind: "I will say to my soul, 'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.' But God said to him; Thou fool! This night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?"——"The rich man also died and was buried; and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments," etc.——Well understood and duly considered, such fearful facts touching the doom of the wicked, however prosperous in wealth and honor, must surely show and impress the folly of such a life—the unutterable woes of such a death!

PSALM L.

This Psalm is ascribed to Asaph as its author, in the usual form in which Psalms are ascribed to David. The history (2 Chron. 29: 30), speaks of Asaph as a "seer," classing him with David as an author of songs of praise. (See also 1 Chron. 25: 1, 2). This Asaph was contemporary with David, active in the scenes connected

with placing the ark on Mt. Zion (1 Chron. 15: 17, 19).——The theme of this Psalm is, *God, the Judge of all the earth*, holding men to sincere and honest worship of God and to intrinsic righteousness toward men, *i. e.*, to obedience as to both the first table of the law and the second. Under the first head, God does not reprove his people for failure in the external rites of sacrifice and offering, but insists upon thanksgiving, the payment of vows, and prayer for divine help in all trouble.——The wicked he rebukes for insincere religion; for a heart utterly out of sympathy with God's word and will, and *in* sympathy with thieves, adulterers, and with slander of nearest friends.——If the question be asked, Is this Psalm a prediction of the final judgment-scene, of the same class with Matt. 25: 31–46, and Acts 17: 31? the answer must be, Not precisely. As to form and drapery, this is rather an ideal scene, representing the invisible judgment which God continually exercises over his moral subjects. Strictly, the first verbs are in the past tense, setting forth that God had even then *already* spoken, and *already* summoned the whole earth before his tribunal. This Psalm, it will be noticed, is silent as to those final awards of eternal blessedness to the righteous and endless woe to the wicked, which are prominent features of the last judgment-scene as given by our Lord. Hence this Psalm was not intended precisely to predict that future judgment-scene, but rather to show that God is really the *Judge of all*, and especially that he searches men's hearts; demands sincere worship, love, and obedience, and can not be imposed upon by any sort of pretension. The points made in this Psalm by no means supersede the necessity of the final judgment as revealed in the New Testament. On the other hand, they fully recognize the principle which underlies that final judgment; they prove a demand for it in this moral world; and are therefore to be regarded, as in a sort, anticipating its essential features and verifying its certainty.

1. The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

The Psalm opens with the three most common and distinct names of God—El, Elohim, Jehovah—best rendered, the Almighty, God, Jehovah or Lord. The first gives the element of supreme power; the second, that combination of infinite qualities which makes him the only proper object of worship; the third, makes prominent his changeless, eternal nature, and consequently his faithfulness to his word. The name Jehovah commonly represents him as the God of his covenant people.——This Great God hath spoken and hath convened the whole earth, summoning all before his tribunal, from extremest East to remotest West.

2. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

"Hath shined," in the sense of revealing himself, his spiritual nature, and his law for men.——"Out of Zion," as the place of his earthly abode.——"The perfection of beauty,—with some reference, perhaps, to its physical features (See Ps. 48: 2), but with more reference to the beauty and glory conferred on Zion by the presence of her all-glorious King.

3. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

4. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

"Come," that most expressive word, always signifies some extraordinary manifestation of presence and power. He is no longer silent but *speaks;* is no longer at apparent distance, but draws sensibly near. As on Sinai, fire invests him round about and especially proceeds before him to manifest his presence. "Shall be tempestuous" translates a single verb which signifies a fearful storm in action, one which impresses the utmost terror and consternation.——Coming thus in glorious majesty, he convokes the heavens and the earth that he may judge his people—*i. e.*, in their presence.

5. Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

6. And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God *is* judge himself. Selah.

First, let the professed saints of God be gathered—those who made a covenant with God over or upon the sacrifice—said with reference to the usual form of ratifying a covenant over slain animals. Instances of such ratification may be seen, Gen. 15: 9–18, and Ex. 24: 5–8.——The heavens, assumed to be present as witnesses, shall testify to God's righteousness, for it is God himself who is the Judge. Do not the pure, exalted minds, peopling the heavens, *know* the infinite righteousness of their God? And is it not pertinent to make this appeal to them to testify and *set forth* [the sense of this Hebrew word] his spotless righteousness?——"Selah;" pause in profound awe; for the great trial is about to open.

7, Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: *I am* God, *even* thy God.

Appropriately the court opens with a call for profound attention. The case of God's professed people Israel comes on first in order. The Lord declares himself to be their God, in covenant relation with them, although they have apparently forgotten and virtually disowned this covenant by their reckless violation of its obligations.

8. I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.

9. I will take no bullock out of thy house, *nor* he-goats out of thy folds:

10. For every beast of the forest *is* mine, *and* the cattle upon a thousand hills.

11. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.

I am not now rebuking thee for neglecting the forms and ritualities of sacrifice. This is not the charge brought against thee. It is not thy bullocks or he-goats that I now demand. All the cattle of the earth—the wild and the tame—are mine. I have no occasion to ask of you even one of them for myself.——The "beasts of the forest" are wild animals, while the cattle on the hills are domestic.——The tone of these verses seem to imply that Israel had not been specially deficient in the rituals and externals of the Mosaic system. It also implies that God regards the worship of the heart as incomparably more important than these externals.

12. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world *is* mine, and the fullness thereof.

13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

Had they supposed that, like themselves, the Lord needs these animals for food? If so, how egregiously had they misconceived his nature!

14. Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High:

15. And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

On the side of things positively required, stand *thanksgiving*—the grateful acknowledgment of mercies received from God; a perpetual recognition of his favors and of the love from which they come. Next, the *payment of vows* unto the Most High, *i. e.*, honest and truthful dealing with God, recognizing him as really existing, and a vow to him therefore as a real obligation to a personal being.——Next (remarkably) God invites (shall we not say requires?) them to call upon himself in the day of their trouble, giving the promise that in such case he will *set them free* from such trouble and they shall glorify him for this deliverance. The beautiful thing here is that God seems to recognize it as one of his rights and privileges to be called upon by his people for help in their time of need, asking only that then they suitably acknowledge his delivering grace and give him the honor due therefor. Is it not wonderful? Yet it is like God!

16. But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to

do to declare my statutes, or *that* thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?

17. Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.

Of the two classes brought before God in this Psalm for judicial examination and appropriate rebuke and instruction, the former are styled "my people" (v. 7); the latter, as here, "the wicked." But it must not be inferred that God finds no sin in the former class, nor that the latter class make no pretensions to piety and have nothing to do with God's law. The distinction seems rather to be one of degree—the latter more openly wicked and immoral than the former. So they appear in points made here descriptive of their character.——"What hast thou to do?" etc., is the Hebrew idiom which asks What *right* or what business hast thou to declare my statutes? The word for "declare" means primarily to count, number; then to set forth in order; to recount, narrate. The formal repetition of the law in reading or in public rehearsal might naturally come under this word. The Lord therefore says here: What right hast thou, O wicked man, to rehearse the words of my law as if thou wert recognizing its obligations; and by what right dost thou take my covenant solemnly upon thy lips while in thy heart thou hatest instruction and castest my words behind thee as unworthy of thy regard and as having no claim on thy obedience—no claim which thou art bound to respect? Why shouldest thou insult thy Maker so?——This earnest rebuke applies in all its force to those who by acts more or less public recognize God's law as binding and take his covenant into their lips, yet in heart hate the restraints of duty to God, hate the instruction which demands a holy life, and thrust from them the claims of God.

18. When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.

The point charged here against this wicked man is not that he is first in the sins named, but second; not that he leads, but that he follows. He shows that his heart is radically in love with sin. If he sees a thief, suddenly he is charmed, fascinated; he loves him and comes at once into sympathy with him. So of adulterers; he falls in at once and takes his lot with them. Literally, with adulterers is thy chosen portion. Thy heart draws thee into their communion, and of course into their sin.——This way of bringing out the sin of the heart is strikingly sharp and clear. The probe goes down to the bottom of the sore. Like Ithuriel's spear, its touch brings up the covered sin.

19. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

20. Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.

Mischief and slander are brought out here. The first verb—*givest*"—is strong; sendest forth, giving it unbounded range and no restraint; making the doing of evil its distinct and direct function, its mission, its business. The tongue concocts deceit—artful schemes for mischief.——"Sittest and speakest"—as if sitting down to a day's work, making a business of slander.—— In the last clause of v. 20 the verb and noun translated "thou slanderest" are taken by most critics to mean—to put a stumbling-block before him. Dr. Alexander translates—to "aim a blow," "give a thrust." The parallelism leads us to interpret of a blow at reputation, a thrust at one's good name.——It fearfully heightens his guilt that no relationship is too dear or sacred to save one from the venom of his slanderous tongue. His own brother, born of the same mother, is specified as an illustration of the strength of that propensity to slander which breaks through all the restraints of the tenderest relationship. Alas! what a view of human nature! Since this showing is often but too true, we must also say, How fearfully depraved is this fallen nature!

21. These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such a one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

"Because vengeance against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart is fully set on evil." So here: While thou wast committing these sins I kept silence; and then, so far from interpreting this silence as only the long suffering of God designed for salvation, to give thee space to repent, thou thoughtest that I was really and entirely like thyself—well enough pleased with sin and sinners.——The original word for "thoughtest" suggests the idea of comparison; thou wert comparing God with thyself. Inasmuch as God manifested no displeasure against thy sin, thou wert assuming that like thyself he felt none. But I must correct this mistake; I must put an end to this false inference; I must fearfully rebuke this abuse of my forbearance. I shall set the truth of this matter in sunlight before thine eyes!——Ah, indeed, and why should he not? How can he afford to leave such misconceptions of himself uncorrected? How can he endure that such license in sin should be inferred from his merciful forbearance, and sinners become more and more fearfully hardened in sin by reason of his "keeping silence?"

22. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.

"Consider this" at once, without delay, ye forgetters of God; know ye that your God and judge sees into the utmost depths of your guilty souls, strips off every covering from your concealed iniquity, is grieved and indignant that you should so abuse his silent forbearance; and therefore can wait in silence no longer, but gives you one last warning. Consider, repent, lest his righteous justice

tear and there be none to deliver!——This word, "tear in pieces," is the Hebrew term for the rending of human flesh by the lion and tiger—a terrible figure of speech to set forth the retributive judgments of the Almighty for the incorrigible sins of men!

23. Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright* will I show the salvation of God.

Whoso makes praise his sacrificial offering, *i. e.*, offers praise *as* the Israelites were to offer animals in sacrifice, gives due honor to God—the honor of the heart which he required (v. 14). To him who rightly shapes his way, his moral course of life, I will show my salvation. The word "conversation" here must be carefully taken in its ancient, not its modern sense—in the sense of one's entire life, not by any means of one's speech only. The original has no specific reference to speech, though obviously it must include words along with deeds. The specifications of the Psalm include slander and sins of the tongue, but by no means exclude all other sins. The demand is that men be honestly, conscientiously careful to obey God's entire law, and shape their whole life into harmony with his revealed will So doing they shall richly experience his salvation.

PSALM LI.

Every feature in this Psalm concurs with the caption to show that David wrote it to express his penitence and his prayers for mercy after the rebuke of Nathan the prophet had brought his great sin in the matter of Bathsheba and Uriah fully before his mind, and the Spirit of God had brought the conviction of his guilt heavily upon his heart. The historical account of this great sin appears 2 Sam. 11; the rebuke of Nathan, 2 Sam. 12: 1–14. David's reply to this rebuke is given there in fewest but most expressive words: "I have sinned against the Lord." Ps. 32, as we have seen, treats of this case and gives some of its points with great pertinence and force. This Psalm holds the mind closely to David's bitter repentance and to his most earnest supplications for mercy and for such moral cleansing as should save him evermore from falling again before any possible power of temptation. Assigned to "the chief musican" for perpetual use in the service of song before the congregation of Israel, it testifies that no false modesty and no indulged pride withheld him from making his confession as public as his sin had been notorious. He had sinned before the nation; so he would have his repentance go forth before not the nation only, but the world.

1. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy

loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

2. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

Overwhelmed with a sense of guilt and ill-desert, what could he do, king though he was, but cry for mercy, resting his plea upon the known "loving-kindness and tender mercies" of his God? His only hope lay here—he had known that the infinitely holy and righteous God *could forgive* the penitent. Therefore without one word or thought of self-defense or even extenuation, admitting every thing, confessing all, and humbling himself low before God, he pleads for mercy—mercy simple and pure—nothing else. Yet he would add, not in the line of self-vindication, but of conscious weakness and of inexpressible longings to be kept pure henceforth and forever; "Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity; cleanse me from my sin." Take away from me, not only the condemnation under which my guilty soul might justly sink, but the very spirit of sinning—that pollution of soul which makes sin morally possible. "Cleanse me"—that I sin no more.

3. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin *is* ever before me.

4. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done *this* evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, *and* be clear when thou judgest.

Primarily, this means: "For I *know* my transgression; my sin is continually before me." I see it; I can not ignore it; the deep consciousness of its guilt will go with me to my grave.——No doubt it is implied also that he publicly "acknowledged," *i. e.*, confessed his sin and guilt in this matter. But this language primarily contemplates his *relation to God*, and so far forth, what he means to say is that he is deeply, painfully, sensible of his sin. He says, "*I know it!*" It is a relief to his burdened soul to say this and to place himself before God in this only true attitude—a consciously guilty sinner.——"Against thee, thee only, have I sinned;"—the relations of this sin toward thee altogether eclipse all its other relations. I can scarcely think of any thing else; I have done the evil toward thee, abusing thy love, outraging all my most sacred obligations, requiting, with this awful crime, the honors conferred on me in putting me upon the throne over this thy great people—Ah! what have I not done to offend and grieve thee!—— I say this to justify thee, O my God, in the most severe sentence thou mayest pronounce against me, to clear thee of all wrong, however terrible thy judgments upon me may be.——This I take to be the sense of the last clause of v. 4. To make David say, I have sinned against thee, O God, *to the end* that, or *in order* that, thou mayest be justified in condemning me, is to miss his meaning egregiously. But that he should say: I make this fullest possible

confession of my sins as specially *against thee*, so that thou mayest be vindicated in the severest inflictions upon me therefor, is germain to his state of feeling; is in itself intrinsically right, and is therefore, I judge, to be accepted as his meaning.

5. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

For many and cogent reasons, this verse demands the most thoughtful and candid attention. We should labor to interpret it so as to do justice to David's feelings, and much more, to the ways of God, the Great Creator and Father.——The verb translated "was shapen" must mean *was born*. The verse therefore undeniably speaks of the time-point of *birth* and of *conception* in the womb. What does it affirm?——So far as I can see, we are to choose between these four supposable constructions.——

1. I was conceived and born with sin *on the part of my mother*—in or under her sin.

2. I was conceived and born *a sinful thing*.

3. I was conceived and born *actually sinning*.

4. I was conceived and born of a sinning race, with the antecedent occasions of sin in my constitution, rendering it morally certain that I should fall before temptation.

Let us examine these suppositions in their order.

1. It bears strongly, and in my view unanswerably, against the first proposed construction that David was in no mood of mind to impute his sin and the blame of it to his mother. True confession of one's own sin has not the least sympathy with throwing the blame of it upon another. No sinner since the world began, under genuine and wholesome conviction of the guilt of his own sin, has ever yet believed or felt that the blame of it was really chargeable upon his mother. True conviction of guilt does not work that way—never brings out that result. We must therefore reject this construction as incompatible with David's spirit at this time, and with the facts of the case.

2. *Conceived and born a sinful thing.* Of course I use the word "thing" here as entirely distinct from an active agent; in fact, in contrast with the idea of voluntary, responsible moral action.—— This construction of the passage holds that at the time-point of conception and of birth, the material body is a corrupt sinful thing, and that the yet undeveloped moral powers are in some sort of anticipation, sinful also. It is common to argue this from physical analogies, *e. g.*, that the stream proves the nature of the fountain; or from the analogies of brute instinct: the new-born adder or the infant tiger has all the *nature* it will ever have. The fatal fallacy of such logic lies in ignoring the radical difference between a morally acting mind and either the impulses of brute instinct or the course of unintelligent matter. Analogies built upon such ignoring prove nothing. The simple question still returns upon us. Can any mere *thing* be in itself sinful, *i. e.*, full of

sin? If this be true, the staggering question comes back to us: *Who made it so?* And yet again, How *can* this be; for does not God himself define sin to be "transgression of law?" (1 John 3: 4) and say also that "where no law is, there is no transgression?" (Rom. 4: 15.) Does not every rebuke of sin that ever fell from his lips assume it to be the active agency of a being capable of knowing duty and of refusing to do it? "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin?" (James 4: 17). Yet again, do the awards of the final judgment pass upon mere *things* as sinful and punishable, or rather upon sinfully acting men? See how this is put by Jesus himself (Matt. 25: 31–46), and by Paul (Rom. 2: 4–16). Or yet again: Is it supposable that this "*sinful thing*," say the fœtus or the infant at birth, can be self-condemned in conscience for this supposed sin—that is, for *itself*—a sinful thing—not for what it *does* but for what it *is?* Yet this power of self-condemnation is beyond question an essential quality in a sinner. He is such in his very constitution that he is capable of discerning moral right from moral wrong and therefore of condemning himself for his own morally wrong doing. But how can this supposed *sinful thing* ever have a moral consciousness of responsible sin for being what it is at the point of conception or the point of birth?——These points of argument are put (by necessity) with the utmost brevity. They will however, if the reader understands them, suffice to show that this construction of David's language must be rejected as involving moral absurdities and impossibilities, as being entirely irreconcilable with the nature of sin as known to the human consciousness and as set forth in the word of God.

3. Does David speak of himself as *actually sinning* at the point of conception or of birth? Does he say in this verse—Behold I was born in the act of personal sinning: I was conceived by my mother while actually sinning against God?——It would seem scarcely necessary to debate this theory of construction, further than to put it to any reader—Do you really believe that David could have meant to say this? If so, do you assume that the sin he thought of was *in any respect like* those dreadful sins against Bathsheba, against Uriah, against the Hebrew nation, and most of all, *against God*, under the conviction of which his soul is humbled in the dust and overwhelmed with the agony of grief and shame? But to suppose that his mind has flitted away to some other kind of sin, utterly unlike this is to ignore his whole mental state and to assume a practical impossibility.——We may therefore safely dismiss this theory of construction.

4. There remains only this supposable construction, viz.: that David thinks of himself as of a sinning race, born of sinning parents, born with the antecedent temptations and occasions of sin (not the efficient and necessitating causes) existing in himself, and consequently under circumstances which induced sin at the earliest moment possible. This fact is pertinent here, not as an

extenuation of his guilt, but as suggesting his own moral frailty, his danger of falling again before temptation's power, and his pressing need—a want that seemed almost crushing—of most thorough moral cleansing and of most effective moral succor from God's Spirit that he may stand henceforth in purity.——In this view of it his meaning is fully in harmony with the words that immediately follow, as we shall see.——In this construction the passage classes itself with Job 31 : 18, and Ps. 58 : 3, as evincing a special Hebrew idiom or proverbial expression in the sense of doing a thing from the earliest practicable moment. Job said—"From my youth the fatherless was brought up with me as with a father and I have guided her *from my mother's womb*;" the Psalmist: "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

"In the inward parts," "in the hidden part," are expressions precisely equivalent to our usage of the word *heart*. God seeks an honest, pure, truthful heart. Behold, his approving eye is only upon true sincerity. He abhors all hypocrisy. The sincerely honest heart he will teach true wisdom.——This verse, therefore, gives us God's standard of holiness, his ideas of what it really is. Consequently the opposite of this is *sin*. But its opposite is not a body of merely sinful matter, but is certain moral states and acts of mind, such as insincerity, untruthfulness, dishonesty, false professions of penitence, a false show of reformation. Therefore David longs, with irrepressible yearnings, to be made thoroughly pure in heart and deeply sincere in his repentance. Oh, might he be lifted above all the power of such temptations as those before which he has so fearfully fallen!

7. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

The Hebrew words for "purge" and for "hyssop" come from the sacrificial system, and indicate that moral cleansing from sin of which those sacrifices and rites were typical. "Purge" means, take sin out of me; set me free from its presence and power.—— "Hyssop" is the name of a humble shrub of the desert, in constant use for the sprinkling of sacrificial blood. See Ex. 12 : 22, and Num. 19 : 6, 18.——The last clause of the verse repeats the thought with a strong sense of the beauty and preciousness of the moral purity so obtained.

8. Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.

Make me hear [from thy lips] words of joy and gladness, that the bones, crushed by thy words of terrible rebuke, may again rejoice in the manifestations of thy forgiving love. Whatever took

hold of the soul strongly, deeply, the Hebrews thought and spake of as felt in the "bones."

9. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities.

The two clauses of this verse are essentially parallel, both giving the idea of true forgiveness, which is that of *overlooking* sin, regarding it no longer as demanding punishment, but passing it over, "remembering it no more." It amounts therefore to the same thing whether the Lord hides his face from sin or blots the sin out; in either case he is thought of as putting the sin away from his mind's eye and looking upon the sinner in a sense as if he had not sinned. For this the penitent soul of David longed exceedingly, for it seemed to him unendurable that God should hold his sin continually before the eye as if too bad to be forgiven. It is refreshing (O who can tell how much so!) that the Infinite Father *can* forgive in this full sense of "hiding his face from our sin and blotting out our iniquities!"

10. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

"*Create*" conveys a strong sense and high appreciation of the divine agency, yet without at all implying that this agency is physical rather than moral, *i. e.*, such as creates matter rather than such as molds mind and moral character. Obviously, since spiritual truth must of necessity be expressed largely in terms drawn from the material world, we must determine whether this influence be physical or moral by our knowledge of that which it acts upon and of the effects it produces. Here the parallelism of the verse comes to our aid, showing that the thing David prayed for was precisely a spirit, a mind, fixed, settled, established, in piety. This is the sense of the Hebrew word for "right"—"a right spirit." David prayed to be kept steadfast in obedience, as opposed to a fickle, changeful mind, easily seduced into sin by temptation.

11. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me.

To stand in the presence of kings is to enjoy their favor as well as to be in readiness to do their bidding. The manifestations of God's presence are essentially the same as the expressions of his favor and love. Hence David prays here that God would not repel him away from his kind regard because of his great sin. Let me still live before thee, still walk in thy light, believe in and enjoy thy love.——The New Testament doctrine that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of each saint, as God of old dwelt in his earthly temple, appears here in its full development. David prayed that God would not take this divine Presence from his soul, but let it return rather and abide in all its power. How could he

hope to live a steadfast, holy life without this present Spirit of God ever teaching, impressing, quickening. With such views of its necessity, we must suppose that this prayer expressed his most earnest desire. It implored the blessing which more than any other he felt that he *must have.*

12. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me *with thy* free Spirit.

"The joy of thy salvation"—such joy as a conscious sense of pardon and that peace with God which is the witness of present salvation evermore imparts. This joy had for a long time ceased from his heart, while his troubled conscience and his guilty unrest had filled his soul with agony. (See Ps. 32: 3, 4, and notes there).——In the last clause our translators have put in the word "thy" without authority in the original. The fact that David said "thy" in v. 11, "thy Holy Spirit;" but did not say "thy" in v. 10, nor in this verse, nor in v. 17, goes far to show that he thinks in all these latter cases of his own spirit and not directly of God's Spirit. It is indeed a prayer for God's gracious help; but his precise meaning is—Uphold me by quickening in me a willing, obedient, loving, and spontaneously acting spirit; *i. e.*, help me, O Lord, to do right with all my heart and soul, with the most spontaneous outgoing of my soul's aspirations and endeavors. That is, he is here indicating *what* he wanted rather than the agency by which he hoped to get it.

13. *Then* will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

Thus restored and thus girded with new spiritual strength, he will gladly resume his Christian labor for the good of others. Especially will he teach sinners—those who like himself had grievously departed from the Lord—what God's ways of mercy are; how freely and how gloriously he can forgive! Ah, could he not testify to this from the depths of a broken heart! Certainly, under the influence of such witnessing testimony, sinners would return again to God and find such joys of salvation as those which now gladden his soul.——The words "sinners shall be converted unto thee" might apply either to those who like himself had previously known God but had grievously sinned, or to those who had never either known God or sought him. Christ spake of Peter as "converted" after his great sin (Luke 22: 32).

14. Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation: *and* my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

15. O Lord, open thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth thy praise.

"Deliver me from blood" is the expressive phrase of the original, looking it would seem to the current idea that the blood of the

murdered man had a voice that cried for vengeance and bore in itself a terrible power of retribution upon the guilty murderer. (See Gen. 4: 10). God had declared that he would require the blood of murder (Gen. 9: 5). And in this very case David could not forget those words sent him from God through Nathan: "Because thou hast slain Uriah with the sword of the children of Ammon, therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house" (2 Sam. 12: 9, 10). Yet David might and did pray that God would spare him personally from the doom of the murderer and blot out this great sin.——Thus forgiven, "my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness"--not "righteousness" however in the sense of strict justice, but of clemency, goodness.——"Open my lips" by giving me free pardon, and in this way, abundant occasion to testify to thy forgiving love; and then my mouth shall witness to thy praise. Loosen my tongue, and it shall indeed speak for thee in testimony to thy wondrous grace.

16. For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it:* thou delightest not in burnt offering.

17. The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

If the sacrifice of animals even by the thousand could have washed away his guilt, or in any way appropriately met his case and the demands of infinite justice, how gladly would he have made the offering! But God had taught him better. The sacrifices that God desired and demanded were a broken heart and a contrite spirit—a heart humbled, consciously self-smitten for its sin, thoroughly contrite, justifying God, and utterly condemning himself. Such a state of heart, God would not despise; could not thrust away.

18. Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

19. Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering: then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

It is refreshing to see David's heart return to its former love for Zion and to prayer in her behalf, with a just sense of his royal responsibilities. Doubtless he felt that his sins had brought great scandal on the name of Israel's God, and spiritual danger upon the Zion he had once loved and labored for. But now with a broken heart and a sense of pardon from God and of his restored favor, it was most pertinent that his prayer should revert again to those great interests of national worship and national piety which he, alas! had done so much to imperil. Will he not give his spared life and his restored soul afresh to the care of the Lord's people, and to prayerful sympathy for Jerusalem, the city of his God? God smiling again upon his Zion as well as upon his own long burdened and guilty soul, there shall be within her sacred walls

yet many other acceptable offerings and sacrifices to the honor of Israel's God and for the good of his worshiping people.

This penitential Psalm of David has a wonderful history stretching all along down the ages since first the royal penitent wrote it in tears, and passed it over to "the chief musician" for the public service of the great congregation. It impresses us as one of the masterly compensations wrought out in God's wisdom that so many thousand hearts have prayed and sought mercy of God in the use of these fitting words, and have been lifted out of the depths of despair into peaceful hope by the inspiring power of this Psalm and of this case of forgiving, restoring mercy. O how many stricken hearts have found every feeling anticipated, every want of their souls met by these utterances of the royal Psalmist! How the thought and the feeling they could scarcely find words to express, have flowed into the channel prepared for them in these petitions, and there has been somehow a new sense of the possibility of mercy begotten by the fact that these words of one of the chief of sinners did come up with acceptance before God, and were placed in his word for the helpful encouragement of all like-minded sorrowing souls onward to the end of time. So God is wont to bring good out of the evil of sin.

PSALM LII.

The caption of this Psalm, "A Psalm of David when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul and said to him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech," gives the occasion and subject definitely, viz., David's words addressed to Doeg who sought to betray him into Saul's power. The history stands in 1 Sam. 21: 1–9, and 22: 9–23, and evinces the bitterest rancor on the part of Saul against David, and all who might have done for him even the offices of common humanity. In the light of this rancor, we may estimate justly the sin of Doeg, since he put himself entirely with Saul in all his malignity toward David and those who befriended him.

1. Why boasteth thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God *endureth* continually.

The exquisite beauty and force of this rebuke lie in the contrast drawn between mischief and goodness—between Doeg, proud of his wickedness, and God, glorying only in his perpetual benevolence. How canst thou, O Edomite, think it thy glory to do such mischief, when the great God deems it his highest glory to do good? Look at his eternal love toward all his creatures, and see in the true glory thereof thine own guilt and shame in that thou canst boast in thine utter wickedness!——So God's example should stand forever, a rebuke to all mischief in act, and to all malignity in spirit.——The original word for "boast" suggests *making a shine*,

showing off for proud display, as if it were his chosen distinction upon which he prided himself. O how guilty and how base the man who can deem it his proud distinction to be totally unlike God; to be as conspicuous and great in malignity as God is in his loving-kindness!——Dr. Alexander thinks the address here, "O mighty man" is to Saul and not to Doeg. But obviously the caption was designed to indicate Doeg rather than Saul. All the points made in the Psalm fit the case of Doeg; so that there is no occasion to discredit the authority of the caption.——Some commentators assume that the last clause of v. 1 implies only this: All thy efforts for my destruction are futile, for God, my Refuge, is forever good. But the words do not suggest God as a refuge or David's trust in him. The construction given above is therefore better.

2. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.

3. Thou lovest evil more than good; *and* lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.

Of course, the tongue is here personified as if itself had the malicious purpose and the intelligence to plan schemes of mischief, and power to cut like a razor. In David's view, mischief and lies were thoroughly congenial to the heart of Doeg, done without repugnance; loved more than truth and well-doing. Is not this real *depravity?* Well may we pause ["Selah"] and dwell on the ineffable meanness and guilt of such a heart!

4. Thou lovest all devouring words, O *thou* deceitful tongue.

5. God shall likewise destroy thee forever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling-place, and root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.

"Thou lovest all destructive words," words having the power to *swallow up* and destroy. God also will destroy thee, for vengeance against such wickedness is demanded of the righteous God.——The verbs in Hebrew are strongly significant, thus: God will tear thee down ["destroy"] as men tear down old or worthless buildings; will seize upon thee ["take"] as men take up fire from the hearth; he will pluck thee from thy dwelling-place as a tree is torn up, and will uproot thee from the land of the living. Pause and consider! for who can withstand the mighty God!

6. The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:

7. Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, *and* strengthened himself in his wickedness.

His fall will be so conspicuous and striking that the righteous will take note thereof and be quickened to fresh reverence toward

the Great Avenger.——"Laugh," here, as in Ps. 2: 6, indicates, not a malicious exultation, but a keen sense of the infinite impotence and folly of such wickedness. We may infer this from what they say: "Behold! mark this man who never trusted God, but trusted riches and wickedness instead! See his fatal end! So shall all thine enemies perish, O God! (Judg. 5: 31).

8. But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God forever and ever.

9. I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done *it:* and I will wait on thy name; for *it is* good before thy saints.

The green tree is a figure (at once beautiful and expressive) of that which is pleasant to the sight, useful, thriving, and enduring. The root of David's strength was finely indicated by locating this tree in the house of God.——"I trusted," literally I *have* trusted, but implying also the future: I will trust in God's name which endures forever.——"I will praise thee forever because thou hast *wrought*"—achieved—he does not define what, but leaves us to assume it to be that which I trust him for, viz., my safety and ultimate success in my life-work—the thing which God virtually promised when he called David to the throne of Israel.——"I will wait on thy name in the presence of the saints," making the most public manifestations of my grateful and absolute trust in my God. This name is infinitely "good" and therefore most worthy of my utmost confidence. Thus it appears that the horrible wickedness of Doeg could never shake David's confidence in his God. Indeed it only made this confidence the more strong and himself the more bold in avowing it before all God's people.

PSALM LIII.

This Psalm repeats Ps. 14, with slight variations. These were comprehensively indicated in the Notes to Ps. 14. To account for this repetition we may reasonably suppose that David rewrote it for the purpose of making some of its expressions stronger. The Psalm here before us would seem to have been the later version, partly because Ps. 14 stands in the first book and Ps. 53 in the second—a subsequent compilation; and partly because in several points the change from the former to the latter was manifestly made for greater strength.——In the caption to this Psalm we have the additional words, "Upon Mahalath, Maschil." "Maschil" is very common, in the sense, *for instruction.* The words, "Upon Mahalath" occur elsewhere only in the caption of Ps. 88. They are explained variously: by Fuerst, of a musical choir; by Gesenius, of a musical instrument; by Alexander, as indicating disease, a malady, but with special reference here to the moral malady of human depravity, which is the subject of the Psalm.

1. The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity: *there is* none that doeth good.

2. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God.

3. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one.

4. Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people *as* they eat bread: they have not called upon God.

For the general sense of this Psalm the reader may see the Notes on Ps. 14. Only the variations from that Psalm require remarks here.——In v. 1 we have in Ps. 14, "They have done abominable works;" but here, "They have done abominable iniquity," meaning, they have made their iniquity abominable.—— The use of Elohim as the name of God in place of Jehovah, is indicated in the received version which translates Jehovah "Lord," and Elohim, "God."

5. There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee: thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them.

6. Oh that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

V. 5 is made specially strong here: "They were in great fear where there was no real occasion for it, for God hath not only slain but scattered abroad the bones of him who hath pitched his camp against thee. The earlier Psalm had said: "There were they in great fear, for God is in the generation of the righteous." This later one takes the bolder position that God has shown himself to be in the midst of his people by scattering the very bones of their enemies.——And whereas the earlier Psalm had said, The wicked have sought to shame the hope of the poor because they have made God their refuge, this later one turns the tables completely: "Thou" [every righteous man] "dost deem the wicked worthy of real shame because God hath despised them." God's opinion of the wicked is more than the public sentiment of all the universe besides, were it even combined against his. Much more is his opinion of the wicked weighty when all the good are with him, and also the conscience of every wicked man! What avails it then, if for a small moment, the wicked would fain put the righteous to shame? How utterly will they come down when

all beings shall be seen and appreciated as they really are, and they shall "awake to everlasting contempt," and the universe shall know that "God hath despised them!"

PSALM LIV.

The caption of this Psalm is definite as to its occasion and date: "To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil: A Psalm of David when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, "Doth not David hide himself with us?" The history shows that the people of Ziph came twice to Saul with this information as to David. 1 Sam. 23: 19, and 26: 1. Either of these occasions might have suggested this Psalm. In either case the circumstances sufficed to throw David back from all human helpers upon his God in prayer and in grateful trust. Hence he composed this Psalm perhaps at first for his own private worship, and after the public service of song was established, he placed it in charge of the "Chief Musician" to be sung for public instruction ["Maschil"] with the accompaniment of a certain musical instrument ["Neginoth"]. This name (Neginoth) appears in the caption of five other Psalms, viz.: 4, 6, 55, 67, 76.

1. Save me, O God, by thy name, and judge me by thy strength.

"By thy name"—according to those qualities of thy character which are indicated by thy significant names, especially faithfulness to thy promises [Jehovah], and power to save, [El, the Mighty One].——"Judge me by thy strength"—not in the strict sense of deciding which is right, my enemies or myself, but of avenging and delivering me by thy strength. David's prayer, "save me" assumes that the question of *right* as between himself and his enemies is already settled. He now only implores God to execute that implied sentence and give him the results of the divine acquittal.

2. Hear my prayer, O God; give ear to the words of my mouth.

3. For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul: they have not set God before them. Selah.

He gives the reason for this prayer. "Strangers," not in the sense of foreigners but of men alien from God. "Oppressors," of tyranical, violent spirit.——"Seek my soul," *i. e.*, my life. They have no fear of God before their eyes; they act as if there were no God. Saul had cut himself loose from all sense of obligation to obey God and was persecuting David, not to please God but to please himself only.——"Selah" calls for a moment's

thought upon this remarkable fact. How terrible a fact it was in the case of Saul, and is in any other man's case when his spirit becomes reckless of God and he plans and labors to execute with no regard whatever to the Great God!

4. Behold, God *is* mine helper: the Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.

5. He shall reward evil unto mine enemies: cut them off in thy truth.

"Behold," note this; God is my helper, not only ever before me and my mind ever realizing his presence and shaping all my life according to his supposed will, but consequently present as my refuge and deliverer. He is also with all those who befriend me. Placing themselves on my side they are also on the side of God and he will care for them. This might fitly encourage the little band who had cast in their lot with David in these days of his persecution before Saul.——In v. 5, following the oldest and most approved reading, I translate, "*The* evil" [*i. e.*, which they seek to bring upon me] "shall return upon mine enemies; cut them off in thy faithfulness"—to thy promises made to me. David's call and anointing for the throne of Israel involved these promises of protection and ultimate success. In cases almost innumerable David in his sore affliction fell back upon those implied promises and thus lived precisely upon his faith in God.

6. I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for *it is* good.

7. For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

"Freely," in the sense of a "*free-will* offering," technically so called, in distinction from those specially prescribed or required by some definite vow. I will offer a special sacrifice, spontaneously, in grateful recognition of this delivering mercy.——"I will praise thy *name* for it is good;" the qualities of thy character as developed every-where and in particular toward me in all thy ways—all which are comprised in thy *names*—are indeed ineffably good; let me therefore praise thy name with all my soul!——"*Hath* delivered" in past times, and I know that he will also in the future.——"Mine eye hath looked upon mine enemies"—which implies that he still survives; and probably that they have fallen, or at least, have lost their power to harm or even alarm him. The word in Italics, "*desire*," is not indicated in the Hebrew.

PSALM LV.

The caption to this Psalm—"To the chief musician on Neginoth, Maschil, a Psalm of David"—does not locate it in either time or

occasion. The general scope of the Psalm assumes that the writer [David] was in great affliction, severely pressed by enemies, and especially by some one who had been ostensibly in most friendly relations (vs. 12–14). In these sore trials he turns to God in earnest prayer for help; expresses assured confidence that God will deliver him, and builds upon his faith and experience the broadly comprehensive doctrine that every friend of God may cast upon him the disposal of his destiny with no fear as to the final result, assured of his sustaining arm (v. 20).——The personal history of David, as known to us, suggests only the names of Saul and Absalom between whom to choose as this enemy, with some points in favor of each, but none quite decisive for either. The location of this Psalm among others that certainly refer to Saul favors the reference of this to him. The moral lessons of the Psalm are scarcely affected by the decision of this question.

1. Give ear to my prayer, O God; and hide not thyself from my supplication.

2. Attend unto me, and hear me: I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;

3. Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppression of the wicked: for they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.

"Hide not thyself from my supplications"—the conception being that not hearing his cry for help was practically withdrawing himself into darkness and leaving the poor suppliant in utter neglect.——"I mourn"—more strictly *I wander about*, restless and troubled in my musings, and I moan—describing the case of one deeply distressed, roaming about unconsciously under his load of heart-sorrows.——"They cast iniquity upon me," in the sense of pushing their wicked schemes vigorously for my destruction. Literally, they move upon me like the approaches of a besieging army, advancing each hour their assailing lines.

4. My heart is sore pained within me: and the terrors of death are fallen upon me.

5. Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, and horror hath overwhelmed me.

"My heart is sore pained," literally *writhes* in its torture. His life continually threatened, how could he shut off from his heart the terrors of death? For a long time Saul sought David's life with his utmost energy and with the resources of his kingdom.

6. And I said, Oh that I had wings like a dove! *for then* would I fly away, and be at rest.

7. Lo, *then* would I wander far off, *and* remain in the wilderness. Selah.

8. I would hasten my escape from the windy storm *and* tempest.

The history of David's wanderings among the mountain fastnesses of Judah, are a comment on these words. O if I only had wings, how would I lift myself up from the face of a land that has no safe spot for the sole of my foot; how would I fly away, leaving no trace of my steps, and dwell, as the timid birds do, in the wilderness! No storms, like these now beating on me, should reach me there!——"Selah" suggests a pause over a thought so bright in anticipation though only ideal.——The words are no less applicable to David's case when he actually fled the city before Absalom and sought safety in the mountains east of the Jordan.

9. Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues: for I have seen violence and strife in the city.

"Divide their tongues;" distract their counsels, and thus break their combined power—an expression borrowed perhaps from the confusion of tongues at Babel. "In the city," somewhat probably the city of Jerusalem; yet if the Psalm relates to Saul, this city was his capital. If it looks to the scenes of Absalom's revolt, it touches most aptly the condition of *the* great city then. It would be specially painful to David that the holy city, the home of the nation's worship and of the nation's God, should be the scene of such "violence and strife." Their presence in that city moved his soul to this prayer that God would distract their counsels and blast their schemes. So we read in the history (2 Sam. 15: 31): "I pray thee, O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness."

10. Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof: mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.

11. Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

Violence and strife are personified and thought of as patrolling the city, or ranging at will about its walls, day and night—a state of anarchy, a wreck of law and order. The points made in these verses correspond historically with the revolt of Absalom when treason lifted its defiant head, and, for the time, the old authorities were powerless in Jerusalem.

12. For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could have borne *it:* neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself* against me; then I would have hid myself from him:

13. But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance.

14. We took sweet counsel together, *and* walked unto the house of God in company.

In this Psalm David's personal enemies are spoken of as more than one: see v. 3, "*they* cast iniquity upon me," and v. 15, "Upon *them*," and v. 19, "God shall afflict *them*." But here some one is made specially prominent—one who had been esteemed a friend, and indeed a very intimate and confidential friend. We may, perhaps, suppose this friend to have been Ahithophel, in whom David must have had the utmost confidence, and whose treachery sent a pang of bitterest grief to his heart. The history shows that Ahithophel had been one of David's most confidential and trusted counselors, but that in this rebellion his plans contemplated nothing short of David's utter ruin—the reckless outrage of his domestic rights and relations, and the absolute committal of this rebellion to victory or death. Nothing could have been more bitter to David's heart than this astounding defection of his old friend, this apparently sudden transformation of his bosom counselor into a most malign and desperate foe.——"A man mine equal"—of like rank and estimation with myself, whom I had taken to my heart as a brother and into my confidence as one who could never prove false to me. And to crown all, we had been in the closest intimacy in our religious sympathies; we had walked to God's house in company; there we had sought God's counsel in our straits and his blessing on our plans and endeavors. There our friendship had been sanctified and sealed before the mercy-seat and under the eye of Israel's God.——Is not such treachery the keenest torture? Alas, how does it shake all confidence in fallen mortals!

15. Let death seize upon them, *and* let them go down quick into hell: for wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.

I would translate: "Destructions are upon them! They shall go down alive to the grave, for wickedness is in their dwellings, yea, in their hearts." This translation of the first two words follows the oldest authorities rather than the masoretic marginal reading which has governed the received English version. Most of the modern critics accept the authority of the consonants as written in the text rather than the proposed corrections indicated in the Hebrew margin.——The original words do not demand a prayer here, but express only a prediction—the confident assurance that ruin must suddenly overtake such outrageous wickedness. It is remarkable that both Ahithophel and Absalom met their death—in time, soon, and in manner, terribly. The one, in disappointment and chagrin, hung himself; the other, caught by the proud hair of his head, while yet the battle raged in the wood of Ephraim, was left unhorsed and dangling till the darts of Joab pierced him fatally, and his fall put an end at once to this battle and to this rebellion. Thus they went down *living* to their graves—the phrase being taken, it would seem from the case of Korah and his company, swallowed alive by the opening jaws of the earth be

neath their feet. (Num. 16.) The word "quick" is, in the old sense, *living*—the meaning of the Hebrew word here used, and not in the modern sense *soon*.

16. As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me.

17. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

"As for me" well indicates the strong contrast which David designedly puts between his case and that of his enemies. They, prayerless and awfully wicked, go down suddenly and fearfully to their own place; but I cry to my God for help, and in him I find precious salvation.——This allusion to David's stated times for prayer is interesting as showing that he lived in the atmosphere of prayer, waiting continually upon his God at all times, and pre-eminently in all his straits.——The word rendered pray ["I will pray"] has the primary sense of *muse*, meditate; and must certainly be understood to include serious meditation as opposed to merely unthinking and formal prayer.——The last clause should read: "And then he heard my voice." It states the historic fact that in those days of sorest trial when he sought the Lord so earnestly and with such continuous prayer, the Lord met his request most promptly with the desired salvation.

18. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that was* against me: for there were many with me.

From the battle waged against me, he hath redeemed me into peace and prosperity again—a fact the more worthy of notice because the people arrayed against me were many. The last clause plainly means, not that his own party were many, but that the many were, as we might say, fighting *with* him, *i. e.*, in conflict against him. The logic of the passage demands this construction; and the Hebrew words readily admit it.

19. God shall hear, and afflict them, even he that abideth of old. Selah. Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God.

The verb translated "afflict" usually means to *answer*, and in this close connection with "hear" should be so taken. God will hear and answer them [*i. e.*, as their wicked prayer deserves]. "He that abideth of old" is not merely he who *liveth* of old, but he who sits enthroned of old, from everlasting, the Eternal King. ——"Selah;" think of this: He who has reigned through all the ages of the eternal Past, will not he subdue the wicked beneath his feet? Then continuing the construction without pause, we may translate: "God will hear and answer them to whom there are no changes and who fear not God." The word for "changes" might possibly refer to inward, moral changes; but its current usage as well as the logic of this passage strongly favor its refer-

ence to physical changes of condition, *e. g.*, calamities, reverses. God will hear and answer [in righteous justice] those who, long prosperous, have been hardened in iniquity, past all wholesome fear of his name.

20. He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace with him: he hath broken his covenant.

21. *The words* of his mouth were smoother than butter but war *was* in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords.

This continues the description of David's wicked enemy. He turned against his trusting friends; his words were false and his heart foul.

22. Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.

The word for "burden" may be either a noun in the sense *thy destined lot or portion* as assigned to thee by God in his providence; or a verb to be translated, what he *gives* thee, *i. e.*, to bear; the sense of the passage being essentially the same in either construction.——The word "sustain" well expresses the sense of the Hebrew which, though sometimes used for support and nourishment by food, yet readily admits the wider sense, *uphold*, sustain, *i. e.*, to bear the lot of care, labor, or suffering which God may appoint. The passage is essentially reproduced by Peter (1 Eps. 5: 7): "Casting all your care upon him for he careth for you." Of kindred sentiment is Ps. 37: 5: "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass."—— No words can adequately express the richness and preciousness of these promises in their practical relations to the cares and burdens of every-day life. Every heart has its burdens; every heart knoweth its own as none else save God can know them. But this broad promise proffers all needful help under every burden. What help can possibly be more effective and sufficient? Whose arm is stronger to sustain than his? Whose sympathy can be so precious?——It is both pleasant and instructive to think what these words meant as they fell from the lips of David. "My burden," he would say, "was that of an exile driven from his throne, from his home, and wives and children, and more than all, from the altar and sanctuary of my God. I feared for my life; I feared for the welfare of my kingdom and my people; the griefs of a father's heart were embittered by the murderous treason of a son, by the treachery of my dearest counselor and friend, and finally by the agony of seeing that son die almost before my eyes, my aching heart crying out: 'Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!' These were the burdens God gave me to bear; but he gave me also this sweet and restoring promise: 'Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he will sustain thee: he will never suffer the righteous to be moved.' Let the people of God,

all down through the ages read in my case the fullness and glory of this promise!"

23. But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee.

So surely and terribly must the wicked perish! Men of blood and deceit do not halve their days [so the Hebrew]; their sun sinks before it has reached the meridian!——But as for me, I will trust in thee to bear me safely through every peril down to the fullness and ripeness of human years.

PSALM LVI.

Several points are made in the caption. "To the chief musician on Jonath-elem-rechokim; Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath."——The historic occasion "when the Philistines seized him in Gath" is rather inferable from 1 Sam. 21: 10–12, than definitely stated there. Those Philistine servants of Achish were manifestly very suspicious of David, and we may suppose, seized him rudely if not even violently, and brought him before their master. This treatment seem to have suggested the Psalm. ——For the word "Michtam" which occurs only in Ps. 16, and 56–60, see notes on the caption to Ps. 16.——The Hebrew words, Jonath-elem-rechokim, are obscure, and of course are interpreted by the best critics variously, by Maurer, as referring to the musical instrument used; by Gesenius and Fuerst, as the first words of some other song which indicates the tune for this or the manner of performance—the significance of the words being according to the former, "The silent dove among strangers" or exiles; according to the latter, "The dove of God from the far sea." Others, [*e. g.* Alexander] take the words as significant of the feeling and experience of the writer; the "dove" denotes innocence; "dumb" or silent, as destined to bear with none hearing nor even himself uttering his grievances; and among strangers or exiles, far away from his home and people.——The word "upon" ["to the chief musician *upon*"] favors the view of Gesenius. The men of the age of David and Solomon, familiar with the temple music, might readily understand it. But after that familiar knowledge had passed away, only the significance of the words themselves would remain to guide the reader to their meaning here.——The scope of the Psalm is obvious, setting forth his affliction, his prayerful trust in God for help, and his grateful thanksgiving for help obtained.

1. Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.

2. Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up: for *they be* many that fight against me, O thou Most High.

"Be merciful"—a cry for help from God against hostile and powerful men. "Swallow me up," conceives of these enemies as savage beasts, coming down upon him with open jaws, panting incessantly to devour.——The word translated, "O thou Most High" is commonly an adverb meaning proudly, as from a higher position and with superior claims. In this sense it would here describe the spirit of their fighting against him. Hebrew usage does not sustain our translators in taking it as a name of God.

3. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.

Literally, "the day I shall fear I will put my trust in thee." As they pant eagerly for my life all the day or every day, so will I, through every such day of danger, find my refuge and hope in thee. This is putting his faith in God to practical, every-day use.

4. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.

"The words "In God," repeated here, give a striking prominence to his precious relations to his God. We might translate: "In God will I exult, even in his word [of promise]; in God have I put my only trust; I will not fear; what can flesh [the weak arm of mortal man] do against me while God is on my side?" This pause after "fear," and this interrogative construction of the last words are plainly indicated in the original and heighten the force and beauty of the passage.

5. Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts *are* against me for evil.

6. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.

"Thoughts" in the sense of artful schemes, plans, devices against his life. In the last clause of v. 6, the tense of the verb requires this: "They will waylay my steps ['heels'], even as they have lain in wait for my life." They will continue to do as they have committed themselves and have done before. Therefore I have nothing better or else to expect from them than perpetual endeavors to destroy me.

7. Shall they escape by iniquity? in *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.

In the first clause there being nothing in the text to indicate a question, it is better to translate affirmatively: "Upon iniquity is their escape;" meaning either that such has been the fact or that such is their expectation, or yet more probably, both ideas are involved thus: Because they have thus far escaped justice by means of consummate iniquity, therefore they hope to do so in the future.

Upon this rests David's prayer—"In wrath cast down the wicked people, O God." How canst thou endure it that they should perpetrate such wickedness and then escape justice by still other schemes of iniquity?

8. Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: *are they* not in thy book?

"Thou tellest"—by record in a book; literally, thou dost *book* them. So also bottle thou my tears, for a permanent record, to keep them ever before thine eye. Is it not even so? Precious thought—that the Great Father lets no tear of his child escape his notice or fail from his memory!

9. When I cry *unto thee*, then shall mine enemies turn back: this I know; for God *is* for me.

"Turn back," not of their own will and motion, but under God's resistless hand. They shall *be turned* back, despite their malign hostility. I know this because God is with me, on my side, and mightier than the mightiest of my foes.

10. In God will I praise *his* word: in the LORD will I praise *his* word.

11. In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me.

This essentially repeats the sentiment of v. 4. Trusting in God, I will praise his word [of promise]; *i. e.*, will praise him *for* that word. I will celebrate the love and faithfulness of those promises, and of their ever-glorious Author. See notes on v. 4.

12. Thy vows *are* upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee.

13. For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt* not *thou deliver* my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?

In his distress he had made vows to his God. Having now found deliverance, he is holden to repay those vows; they are *upon* him and hold him in the bonds of gratitude and love for their payment in full. The Mosaic law provided for such cases by prescribing appropriate festal sacrifices.——Since in passing through these special perils God had delivered him from death, he now prays that in like manner henceforth God would shield him from whatever perils may await him.

PSALM LVII.

The caption here indicates both the author and the occasion: To the chief musician, Al-taschith; Michtam of David, when he

fled from Saul in the cave." The history (1 Sam. 22: 1, and 24: 1) recites some of David's experiences when secreting himself from Saul in caves. The passages, 1 Sam. 23: 14, 29, and 24: 2, 3, speak of his "abiding in strongholds in the fastnesses of the hills of Judah." If the caption alludes to any one specific point, the history is too brief and general to enable us to locate it.——"Al-taschith" [*destroy not*] appears in the caption of three connected Psalms (57–59), and of Ps. 75. The words occur in the report given by Moses of his prayer of intercession for his people (Deut. 9: 26). David himself said of Saul to Abishai (1 Sam. 26: 9): "Destroy him not." The Chaldee paraphrast suggests that the Psalms which bear this title belong to that period of David's history when he was under the perpetual necessity of saying, "destroy not," and are therefore suited to all similar emergencies of other saints. (Alexander.) May the Lord spare his suppliant people, seems to be the spirit of the song.

1. Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until *these* calamities be overpast.

The strain is remarkably similar to that of the two preceding Psalms—prayer and trust for deliverance from the murderous designs of Saul. "Under the shadow of thy wings"—as in the hour of danger the young nestle under the wing of the mother bird So may God's people always find a refuge, safe and sweet, under his protecting wing.

2. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth *all things* for me.

3. He shall send from heaven, and save me *from* the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

It was his joy that his God was truly *Most High*—mighty in all power; able to accomplish whatever he pleased in behalf of his trustful servants.——In v. 3, the clause translated "from the reproach of him that would swallow me up," may be read, either, Will save me whom my enemy scorns, or, He (God) will scorn my enemy. The enemy is described by the same word as in Ps. 56: 1, 2; one who pants with open mouth to swallow him down.——"God will send forth from heaven his mercy and his truth"—is bold personification, as if mercy and truth were the very messengers of his power, the mighty agents, angels of deliverance to his imperiled servants.

4. My soul *is* among lions: *and* I lie *even among* them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men, whose teeth *are* spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.

"My soul," in the sense of *life*, is in a den of lions. At best, I make my bed among men *on fire* with rage, their teeth and tongue weapons of war for my destruction. This prominence given to slander in the effort of Saul to destroy David, was due to the fact that David had, to a great extent, the hearts of the people, with right and justice, on his side, and therefore Saul must needs traduce and slander his fair name, else the people would not let him destroy David.

5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

Exalt thyself, O thou mighty God, as the friend of the suffering and the righteous—as my Friend in this emergency. Let thy glory as the righteous God be displayed over all the earth in my deliverance!

6. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves*. Selah.

In the second clause, the more facile reading is: They bow or press my soul down into it; they press me into the net spread for me. Then suddenly a new turn is given to the thought: They fall into the very pit which they have dug for my life. Over this let the reader pause to think of God's righteous retributions!

7. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise.

8. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I *myself* will awake early.

In view of such manifestations of God's love and faithfulness to me and of his righteous justice toward my implacable enemies, my heart is fixed, fully purposed and established; I will love thee, trust thee, and praise thee with my utmost powers!——Awake, my soul, to grateful song; let every power of my being conspire to render praise to my Infinite Friend and Deliverer! Let harp and lute pour forth their sweetest strains; let me *awake the dawn* with songs. "Awaken the dawn of morning" is precisely the sense of the original words, and is beautiful poetry.

9. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations.

10. For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.

11. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: *let* thy glory *be* above all the earth.

"Among the people, among the nations," seems to mean, *in their presence*, before them all, to make the glory of his God known to the very ends of the earth. Far is he from being ashamed to

testify for Israel's God. It is in his heart to let all the people of the wide world know how faithful and true is his God, and how rich in mercy to all who call upon him.——To say "mercy and truth are great even to the heavens, reaching unto the clouds"—labors to set forth the exceeding greatness and excellent glory of these moral qualities. How simple the conception, yet how sublime!——Thus, in the highest strain of poetic beauty, and with imagery magnificently grand, does the Psalmist give the testimony of his grateful heart to the mercy and the power shown him of God in his deliverance from his enemies, and in his final triumph in reaching the throne of Israel.

PSALM LVIII.

The caption to this Psalm corresponds to that of Ps. 57, and of Ps. 59, omitting only the allusions which they severally contain to the specific circumstances which occasioned their composition. The location of this between those two and this correspondence in caption, go far to prove that this was regarded by the compilers as in the same class with those, an outgrowth of his persecutions from Saul and particularly leveled against the perversions of justice in the high places of power under which David suffered. The Psalm opens with rebuke of this sin; proceeds to describe the enormity and malignity of human wickedness, and to pray that God would frustrate their wicked schemes with judgments so fearful as to assure the righteous that there is a God above who will award good to the righteous but vengeance to the wicked.

1. Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

In this verse the Hebrew reader will have more difficulty than the English. If we might take "congregation" to mean a judicial assembly, bearing the responsibility of administering justice (if the Hebrews had any such), we should have a facile sense in the verse. But the Hebrew as it now stands has no word for "congregation," but has a word which usually means *dumbness, mute silence.** How to dispose of this word is with the critics the great question. Will ye now truly decree justice, long time dumb, as if with no voice to speak?——Will ye, long guilty of silence, at length give justice a voice through your righteous decisions? Or, are ye indeed dumb when ye should speak righteousness and judge equitably? We get a good sense by any one of these slightly different constructions, but we can not say that any one of them is an easy and natural translation of the Hebrew words. I strongly suspect some error in the text, probably the creeping in of this

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word, *dumbness*—the more probable because the Septuagint has nothing whatever to express this idea. Happily the ultimate sense is clear—a rebuke of those official judges who withheld righteous decisions.

2. Yea, in heart ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth.

So far from sustaining justice and right, they wrought wickedness, and this *with the heart*, through sympathy with wrong, "*with a will*," as we say.——The word "weigh" conceives of ideal scales of justice in which the even balancing of evidence should bring out the truth and the right, but which in their hand and with their heart, are perverted to minister to wrongful violence, and this "in the earth," *i. e.*, in the land of God's covenant, the land of promise to his obedient people. How could the Lord endure that the courts of justice should themselves perpetrate monstrous iniquity in his own land! The fact gives the Psalmist a painfully keen sense of the terrible depravity of human hearts, as we see in the next verse.

3. The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.

This is saying in a very strong way that the race take to sinning as early as they can, and sin with their whole heart in it. The last words of the verse, "speaking lies," fortunately guard us against imputing to David or to the inditing Spirit the idea that infants do in fact begin to sin from their very birth. Nothing in this passage justifies us in assuming that there is sin where there is no evidence of thought, of knowledge of God and duty, or of voluntary moral choice.

4. Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent: *they are* like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear;

5. Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

The poison or virus of wickedness in man may be compared with the poison of the serpent in the points of its power of mischief and of its terrible malignity, yet with no assumption of moral quality in the serpent. The comparison can not "go on all fours." We need not suppose that in David's view man's poison of depravity runs in his blood—belongs to his physical nature in precisely the same sense as in the serpent's. David has not said that he puts the wicked man and the poisonous serpent on precisely the same footing in the particular points of blameworthiness or of propagation to their respective posterity of the qualities that are compared.——The meaning of the verse seems to be that the wicked judge stops his ear from hearing the evidence of truth and justice, even as the deaf adder whom no human skill can charm into a harmless mood just because she has no ear

to hear those charming incantations. Some serpents can be charmed so as not to bite, but the deaf adder can not be, for the charm is addressed to the ear.——"Charming never so wisely" translates a single word, meaning *well-skilled.*

6. Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

In the case of serpents that can not be charmed, the only alternative is this: break in their teeth; or changing the figure slightly, root out the teeth of the young lion; and this he prays God to do with these wicked men. When their malignity is so terrible and their power to harm so great, it only remains to cry to the great and just God to knock in their poisonous fangs, or wrench out their terribly sharp and strong incisors and make those lion-jaws harmless.——The word for "young lion" suggests, not the infant cub, but the full-grown, yet one not old but in the full vigor of youth.

7. Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually: *when* he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.

New figures illustrate the same idea—the waning power of the wicked. Let their resources for mischief grow rapidly less, as waters that spread out over desert sands soon melt away and disappear. When he "treads his arrows," *i. e.* treads his bow in preparation for shooting arrows, let it be as if his arrows were pointless—the heads cut off.

8. As a snail *which* melteth, let *every one of them* pass away: *like* the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun.

Let his march be like the snail's crawl—the point of the figure being however, not speed, but the melting away of substance and power;—according to the current notion that the snail used himself up by locomotion, perhaps depositing the slime of his body in such quantities as to exhaust the body itself. So let the wicked man move—only to exhaust his power the more at every step.——Also let them be as if they had never been—utterly powerless to affect human welfare.

9. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in *his* wrath.

Here we must think of cooking done in the open air, and the pots heated with the thorn-bush for fuel. Sudden gusts of wind sweep the fuel away before any heat is felt. So let the concocting of wicked schemes be suddenly blasted by the breath of the Almighty!——Before your pot shall feel the heat of the thorn-fire, let him [God] sweep the fuel, green or dry, away with his whirl-

wind. So the last clause, translated "both living and in his wrath," may mean. Or, with Alexander, we may refer these words to the flesh within the pot—*whether raw or cooked*, and suppose the sense to be that the whirlwind sweeps away both pot and fuel whether the cooking has been done or not. The former construction seems more natural, because the disaster takes place before the pot begins to feel the heat of the thorn-fire. God's terrible hand is here, wielding the whirlwind of his fury in vengeance upon the guilty schemes of the wicked.

10. The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

11. So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

These manifestations of God's righteous retribution will be so clear that the righteous can not mistake his hand or his heart either. They will rejoice most assuredly, and most righteously too—for ought they not to sympathize with righteousness, to mourn over abounding and mischievous wickedness, and be glad when God puts forth his strong arm to suppress it? Indeed they will have occasion to say, "Of a truth, there *is* a God! Most certainly he will reward the righteous"—the suffering and oppressed ones who stand with him in right doing and in the love of righteousness. In his own time he will judge the earth and bring the wicked to an exemplary and righteous doom!

PSALM LIX.

This is the last of the three Psalms distinguished by "Altaschith" [destroy not]. Its special occasion appears in the words—"When Saul sent and they watched the house to kill him." The reader may see the account in full, 1 Sam. 19: 11–17. Appropriately the Psalmist cries to God for deliverance from such enemies; speaks of his own innocence; descants upon their wickedness, and repeatedly expresses his assured hope in God for the protection which he implores.

1. Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: defend me from them that rise up against me.

2. Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men.

"Defend me," literally, *set me on high*, takes its form of expression from the modes of defensive warfare in which men sought safety in high towers or upon mountain-tops, out of the reach of missile weapons. Their wickedness in seeking his life became his plea for God's interposition—a plea which God could not fail to hear.

3. For, lo, they lie in wait for my soul: the mighty are gathered against me; not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD.

4. They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault: awake to help me, and behold.

"For my *soul*,"—in the usual sense of *life*. They gather together against me—mighty men. On the human side they are too strong for me. Therefore, let thy stronger arm be lifted for my succor.——Happily for David, he was fully conscious that as between himself and Saul, this persecution was in no respect for his fault. He had not sought the throne; was no traitor to his king or his country; and in those military exploits which had aroused Saul's mean jealousy, he had only played the man for his country and for his God. Hence it was in no spirit of presumption that he cast himself absolutely upon God for help.

5. Thou therefore, O LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

This repetition of the divine names is expressive and pertinent: Jehovah, Elohim, God of the celestial armies and especially of Israel; every element of his character and every aspect of his relations signified in these words combine to inspire confidence and hope in this prayer that God would visit all the wicked nations who were in league against him and his people. This allusion to "all the heathen" suggests that the Psalm was written after David reached the throne, at a point when the circle of his personal enemies, once restricted to Saul and his minions, was enlarged to include many contiguous nations.

6. They return at evening: they make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

These verbs are either future or imperative: "Let them return," or, "they shall return;" better the former. He thinks of the Oriental, undomesticated dogs who infest the cities in vast numbers, roaming abroad by day for a meager subsistence, and thronging outside the city walls at night, howling hideously. So let those wicked men who prowl about my dwelling to waylay and murder me, find themselves shut out of the city in the darkness of night to howl like homeless dogs.

7. Behold, they belch out with their mouth: swords *are* in their lips: for who, *say they*, doth hear?

The Hebrew word for "belch out" suggests that wickedness in their hearts is a gushing spring of which the mouth is the outlet, and the floods are forced out under high pressure.——"Swords in their lips" refers to the cruel causeless calumnies by which they traduced and belied David and sought his ruin. They knew that

so long as the people believed him not only innocent but eminently meritorious, it were vain if not even perilous to themselves to seek his life.——"For who is hearing?" the only words found in the original, may be said by David and not by his enemies. So taken, they express perhaps his first feeling in the case, viz.: that for a time God seemed not to take cognizance of their wrong doing. But many commentators favor the sense given in the received version.

8. But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.

To the great God, the opposition of the mightiest of mortals must seem infinitely puny—worthy only of supreme contempt. See Psalm 2: 4.

9. *Because of* his strength will I wait upon thee: for God *is* my defense.

10. The God of my mercy shall prevent me: God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.

Because of *whose* strength? is the first and main question here. To say with some—that of his enemy, involves two difficulties, viz.: that precisely at this point he represents that strength as infinitesimally small, deserving only the derisive contempt of the Almighty, and also that throughout this Psalm his enemies are not one as here but many.——It seems better therefore to assume a reference to *God's* strength—the change of person from the third to the second being too common in Hebrew to occasion the least difficulty. His (God's) strength being such as I have just implied, I will wait upon thee (O my God); "I will watch towards thee" keeping my eye of faith steadfastly fixed on thee alone—this being the sense of the verb here used.——"Shall *prevent* me," in the old sense of prevent, *i. e.*, anticipate; come in for my help in advance of my enemy, ready for my perfect protection.

11. Slay them not, lest my people forget: scatter them by thy power; and bring them down, O Lord our shield.

12. *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips let them even be taken in their pride: and for cursing and lying *which* they speak.

"Slay them not, but scatter them," seems to mean: Do not annihilate them, lest thy people, only too fully relieved from all enemies, should forget their God, their Strength and Refuge. Scatter them abroad into other lands where their doom may be a perpetual lesson upon God's ways of righteous providence. Such, in fact, have been God's ways with his covenant people when apostate.

13. Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them,* that they *may* not *be:* and let them know that God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

It is not by any means clear how this verse is to be reconciled with v. 11—the negative there with the affirmative here; the prayer, "Slay them not," there, with the prayer, "Consume them utterly," which seems to be the meaning of the passage here. It would seem that the parties thought of can not be identically the same, but are in the latter case a more limited number—the incorrigible for whom no mercy can avail.——"Let them—men in general—(not the people destroyed) know that the God who ruleth in Jacob bears sway to the very ends of the earth.

14. And at evening let them return; *and* let them make a noise like a dog, and go round about the city.

15. Let them wander up and down for meat, and grudge if they be not satisfied.

The words of v. 14 become the *refrain* of this Psalm, to which is added here: Let them roam all abroad for food, and if not satisfied, let them remain *all the night—i. e.*, hungry.

16. But I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning: for thou hast been my defense and refuge in the day of my trouble.

17. Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing: for God *is* my defense, *and* the God of my mercy.

"Will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning"—with allusion, probably, to his safety ere the morning dawned, for while his enemies were waiting for the early morning to seize him then, he was gone and was safe. It was by human stratagem that he made his escape, but, noticeably, he gives to God all the praise. God's hand only comes to his thought as having been the means of his salvation; God's loving-kindness exclusively as deserving all the glory.

PSALM LX.

The caption of this Psalm reads: "To the chief Musician upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand."——The words, "Upon Shushan-eduth," raise the usual question whether this is the name of a musical instrument to be used in its performance; or, are the first words of some well known song which would suggest the music for this; or, are here for the suggestions which their proper meaning—*The lily of the testimony*—would bring to the mind. The latter seems most probable. The lily [Shushan] is the symbol of purity, humility, and beauty; while "eduth" [testimony] is used of the written law of God (Ps. 19: 7), or portions thereof (Deut. 31: 19), as conveying

God's testimony respecting himself and his law given to men. It is only the word "*upon*," indicating the relation of these words in the sentence, that favors either of the first two suppositions. Some obscurity hangs over this and similar expressions that appear in the captions of many Psalms.——"To teach," shows that the Psalm was intended for public instruction, perhaps to be committed to memory, and thereby impressed the more deeply on the souls of the people.——The historic allusions are important: "When he strove with" [better, when he subdued, conquered] "the Syrians of the rivers," *i. e.*, of Mesopotamia—the country between the Euphrates and the Tigris—"and the Syrians of Zobah"—a Syrian province north of Damascus, stretching from Hamath to the Euphrates.——Another prominent feature in this series of wars and conquests, is that at this time Joab turned his hand against Edom, and slew of their hosts, twelve thousand in the valley of salt—a well known locality near the confines of Judah and Edom, and adjacent to a very extraordinary salt-mountain, explored and described by Dr. Robinson in his Biblical Researches in Palestine (Vol. 2: 481–484). Jewish history treats briefly of these wars and conquests (2 Sam. 8, and 1 Chron. 18). The passage, 2 Sam. 8: 13, has the word Syrians, but probably by mistake, for Edomites, which appears both in 1 Chron. 18: 12, and in our caption here. The close resemblance in the Hebrew, between Edom and Aram, accounts readily for this error.——The Syrians on the North and East, and the Edomites on the South and South-east—the most powerful among all the adjacent kingdoms, made common cause against David, so that this eventful year became a crisis of immensely critical interest to himself and his people. Hence the pertinence of this Psalm. These were *live* issues, instinct with every element of vital interest. Would their God indeed be with his covenant people? Would he make them victorious over these ancient and mighty nations?

1. O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.

"Thou hast cast us off" with loathing, the original word implies. The time when is not definitely indicated; but such periods of rejection—casting them off for their abominations—had been not infrequent during the times of Saul and of the Judges. If God were to do the same at the time of this writing, the combination of their most powerful enemies against them would be their ruin. Hence the prayer—"O turn thou to us in forgiving mercy again!"

2. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.

3. Thou hast showed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.

"Hast broken it;" literally, hast rent it as with an earthquake. Socially and politically their case had been like that of a country

rent and fissured by earthquakes—the people in consternation as if nothing was firm beneath their feet. God had made them see *hard* times; they reeled under the shock of disaster as men reel from excess of wine. "The wine of astonishment" is such and so much as produces intoxication. The word for "astonishment" describes not so much a state of mind as of body—simple drunkenness and its physical conditions. Politically the Psalmist would say, the people felt themselves helpless, stunned, despairing.

4. Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

Here the Psalm assumes the tone of hopefulness and trust. To those that fear thee, thy obedient people, thou hast given a banner to be unfurled because of truth—truth in the sense either of *thy faithfulness* to thy promises, or of *their fidelity* to thee, their God. In either sense the reasoning is pertinent.——"Selah" indicates that this consideration should be pondered solemnly.

5. That thy beloved may be delivered; save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.

It was ground of hope that God had manifested the most tender, compassionate love for his chosen people. Now, therefore, that the people thou hast so loved may be saved from their powerful enemies, hear our prayer ["*answer* us" being the better reading] and save with thy strong right hand.

6. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

7. Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my law-giver;

8. Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me.

The mind seems here to fall back upon God's ancient promise of Canaan to Abraham and his seed. That precious word of promise "God spake *in his holiness;*" consequently his veracity is forever pledged, and despite of whatever delays or apparent reverses, it will surely be fulfilled. On the strength of this promise David sings—"I will rejoice," for I am sure of Canaan in its largest extent. This promised extent made the great river [Euphrates] its eastern boundary: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates (Gen. 15: 18). So also Ex. 23: 21, and Num. 34: 1–13, and Deut. 11: 24. The conquest under Joshua comes up afresh before his mind and he sees himself in like manner sure of possessing those extensive regions North and East, which fell within the original grant, but had not as yet been wrested from Israel's national enemies. His words, "divide," "mete out," come from the records of Joshua's work (Joshua 13: 7, and 18: 5). "Shechem," within the tribe of Ephraim and for ages a prominent city on the

West of Jordan, represents the cities in that entire section; while "Succoth" on the East of Jordan is the representative city for all the Eastern section. It is probably more than a mere coincidence that both these cities appear under these names in the account of Jacob's return from Padan-aram to this promised land to re-assert his hereditary title and preempt by actual possession. See Gen. 33: 17, 18. At Succoth he made booths for his cattle, thus giving the place its significant name. At Shechem he pitched his tent and set up his altar to the God of Israel. Hence these names were associated with hallowed, inspiring memories.——"Gilead" (a comprehensive name for a large district East of Jordan) "is mine;" "Manasseh"—(a tribe populous enough to hold one large territory on the West of Jordan and another on the East) "is also mine;" Ephraim (if not first, yet at least second in population and in power) is thought of as "the strength of his head," meaning the protection of his life—his life-guard; while Judah has the pre-eminence as bearing the scepter, with reference probably to the prophecy (Gen. 49: 10) which honored Judah with precisely this distinction.——Moab is doomed to most servile purposes, tributary to her far more powerful neighbor. "*Upon*" (rather than "*over*") "Edom will I cast my shoe"—a thing closely associated with the "washpot," and like that referring (it would seem) to the custom of putting upon the most menial servants the duty of washing their master's feet. "Upon Edom will I cast my shoe" signifies that I will give it to him to take care of, preparatory to washing my feet, or throw it to him or at him to indicate his duty.—— Philistia is a third power in this subject and menial class. Some critics take these words for irony: "Now, Philistia, send up thy shouts of victory over the stripling David!" But they may mean in sober earnest—"Join thou, O Philistia, in the applause which shall greet me as the sole monarch of all the lands promised of old to the seed of Abraham." The tone of this entire passage (v. 8) is that of confident assurance of the conquest of all these nations, so long formidable to Israel, but at that time subjugated through God's blessing upon the arms of David.

9. Who will bring me *into* the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

10. *Wilt* not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off? and *thou,* O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?

But at the time of this writing, these achievements were rather present to his faith than realized fully in fact. At least one strong city the marvel of its time for its military strength, the wonder of the ages for what both nature and art had done for it—*Petra*—the rock-hewn capital of ancient Edom, remained to be subdued. Who will bring me into that city of strength? Wilt not thou, O God,—thou who in former years didst cast us off with loathing for our sins, and to whom we had to say—"thou wilt not go forth with our armies"? The last verb being future in tense, I

give it this turn, the sense manifestly being that in some previous periods then before the mind, God would not go out with his people Israel to give them victory. But the Psalmist's prayer is that God would now in mercy forgive, and appear at length to make them victorious over their most powerful foes.

11. Give us help from trouble: for vain *is* the help of man.

12. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

"Give us help *from our enemies*" (better than "from trouble") "for vain is salvation from frail man"—this word for "man" suggesting strongly his special frailty as one made of the earth. ——"Through God we shall *develop strength*"—exercise martial power—seems to be the exact idea, yet of course implying success and victory in war. The same words appear in Balaam's prophecy (Num. 24: 18); "And Edom shall be a possession and Seir also shall be a possession for his enemies; and Israel shall *do valiantly*."——All this comes of being truly *in God*—which is the most exact equivalent of the Hebrew words translated, "through God." Being in harmony with him, hidden in him as our life, perfectly united with him in sympathy, we *can do any thing*, or rather there is nothing that he can not and will not do *for us*. for he it is who shall tread down our foes beneath his glorious feet!

PSALM LXI.

In the caption, "To the chief musician upon Neginah, a Psalm of David," the word "Neginah" belongs to a family which describe a musical instrument. The form of the word seems to imply that it was David's, perhaps as being his invention.——We are left to infer the occasion and date of this Psalm from its contents. The utmost we can say is that it might well have been written by David to describe his experience, during his temporary exile from Jerusalem in consequence of the conspiracy of Absalom.

1. Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer.

2. From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.

3. For thou hast been a shelter for me, *and* a strong tower from the enemy.

A Hebrew might say, "From the ends of the earth," with no reference to the lands on the other side of the globe. The word for "earth" is often used of the land of Palestine, to the remote

districts of which David fled across the Jordan from the face of Absalom. Or we may take this language as an index of his feeling of exile and loneliness when thrust away from the city of his throne and of his God. To such a heart as David's such an exile would *seem* like a banishment to the ends of the earth.——From this heart-oppressing exile—his soul overwhelmed with grief—he cried to God for help. Verily, that was a time for a child of God to pray! Why should he not? What else could he think of? Whither else could he turn for help?——"Lead me to the rock which is *too high* for me to reach for safety without a guiding and helping hand." He pleads what God had done in his former exigencies: "For thou *hast* in other days been a shelter for me: So be thou my shelter yet again."——This is one of the comforts of Christian experience—the logic of past mercies, good to inspire hope and prayer for help under pending and pressing want.

4. I will abide in thy tabernacle forever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

"I will abide" is more precisely, "Let me abide"—the peculiar form of the verb indicating most earnest desire and prayer. This is the utterance of David's heart. Having loved the house and worship of God in his holy tabernacle above his chief joy; having given to it his best thoughts, his noblest powers of poetry and song; and having rested in the sweetness of trust and in the simplicity of faith upon God's promises to himself and his seed for generations to come, including the Great Messiah as the ultimate consummation of these promises (See 2 Sam. 7), what could be more fitting than this outpouring of prayer and this utterance of his strong confidence in God?——"Selah" is fully in place here. Let the pious reader pause and enter into the sympathies of David's great and god-like heart!

5. For thou, O God, hast heard my vows: thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.

"Heard my vows," *i. e.* the prayer which was in them, which constituted the soul of those vows. To all the fearers of his name God gives a heritage of blessings. David is consciously with them in spirit and character; God has recognized him as one of them by giving him in past days his portion of their heritage.

6. Thou wilt prolong the king's life: *and* his years as many generations.

7. He shall abide before God forever: O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.

We may suppose that during this exile David had a sustaining trust in God that he should live to return to his home, city, and throne; yet this language manifestly looks quite beyond his own personal life The germ of the idea lying here is in the perpetuity

of his throne in his posterity. This idea was boldly prominent in the promise as made him through Nathan the prophet (2 Sam. 7: 11–20) and reproduced (Ps. 89: 19–37): "When thy days shall be fulfilled and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, and I will establish his kingdom." Whereupon David expressed the deep emotions of his heart in the words: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come" (2 Sam. 7: 18, 19). The writer of Ps 89 makes this point peculiarly strong: "Once [one thing] have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever and his throne as the sun before me," etc. (Ps. 89: 35, 36).——It may not be possible for us to say how fully developed David's views were of that greater Son who was to hold his throne forever; but we know that they took hold powerfully of his heart. We might trace this doctrine also in many prophecies of later date. The father of John Baptist, filled with the Holy Ghost, prophesied, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a horn of salvation [a powerful Savior] for us *in the house of his servant David* as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began" (Luke 1: 67–70.)——It is a matter of curious interest that the Chaldee Targum paraphrases these words: "Thou wilt add days upon days to King Messiah;" and closes the Psalm thus: "I will pay my vows *in the day of the redemption of Israel, and on the day in which King Messiah will be anointed to reign.*" This may be supposed to give the traditional interpretation of the Psalm by the learned Jews during the period shortly before the coming of Christ.——"O prepare mercy and truth"—in the sense, appoint or ordain that thy mercy and truth shall be manifested in his behalf.

8. So will I sing praise unto thy name forever, that I may daily perform my vows.

So in this hope, inspired by this sweet confidence in thy promise, I will sing the praises of thy name forever.——Regarding this Psalm as giving expression to David's thought and feeling during those bitter days of exile from his throne before Absalom, we see that his religion was a living power in his soul—a fountain of inspiration to his hope and endurance—an inexpressible comfort to his otherwise desolate heart. What time all else, or almost all, had failed him, his hope still rested on God's promise. He *had known God;* had trusted him through scenes of sore and searching trial before; and this new avalanche of trouble only drove him again to the same Refuge.

PSALM LXII.

In the caption to this Psalm as in Ps. 39 and 77, we have the words, "To Jeduthun." See Notes on the caption to Ps. 39. There is nothing in the Psalm which determines with certainty its date and special occasion. Some critics locate it in the times of Absalom; others, in the times of Saul. Specially pertinent to the latter is the very frequent figure of a "rock" to signify safety and refuge; the intimation also that he stood chiefly alone against numerous foes (v. 3), and that those foes resorted to slander and lies for his destruction (v. 4). The central thought—the key-note of the Psalm is—God only my help and salvation: man powerless to harm me, but God almighty to defend.

1. Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him *cometh* my salvation.

It is noticeable here that the word for "wait" is properly *silent*. "My soul is *silent* toward God." In reverent awe and quiet trust my soul sits peacefully before him, biding his time for deliverance, trustful that he doeth all things well. The same word, in a different grammatical form, occurs v. 5: My soul, be thou *silent* toward God only.——Another of the very characteristic words of this Psalm is the first one of this verse, here translated "truly," but better, "*only*." It occurs six times in this short Psalm (vs. 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9). The English version translates it "only" in four of these cases; "truly," in v. 1, and "surely," in v. 9. The uniform sense "*only*" is right. In God *only*, to the complete exclusion of every other help, do I put my trust.

2. He only *is* my rock and my salvation; *he is* my defense; I shall not be greatly moved.

"My defense"—my *high place*, castle, tower, or mountain-top, lifting me above the missile weapons of my foes.——"Shall not be greatly moved." Though I may not escape all disturbance from these foes who seek my life, yet my God will preserve me from any serious results.

3. How long will ye imagine mischief against a man? ye shall be slain all of you: as a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as* a tottering fence.

Critically, there are two principal points to be settled in the construction of this verse: (*a*) Whether the question, "How long," should govern the last clause as well as the first; (*b*) Whether the verb "*be slain*" is in the active voice or the passive, since on this point the best authorities are divided.——On these points the evidence seems to me to favor the former alternative in each case. So construed, I would translate: "How long will ye assail [rush violently upon] a man? How long will ye, all of you, murderously

thrust at one who is only a leaning city-wall, a stone wall pushed almost over?" The thought is that which David put to Saul (1 Sam. 24: 14): "After whom is the king of Israel come out? After whom dost thou pursue? After a dead dog, after a flea."

4. They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency: they delight in lies: they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly. Selah.

They counsel only to hurl him down from his position [*i. e.*, in the public confidence], and they aim to do this by lies—false accusations. The suffering party is obviously the same in this verse as in the preceding, *i. e.*, David, remorselessly persecuted by his malign enemies. The representation corresponds fully to his case when persecuted by Saul.

5. My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation *is* from him.

6. He only *is* my rock and my salvation: *he is* my defense; I shall not be moved.

7. In God *is* my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.

"Wait," *i. e.*, in *silent*, quiet expectation, and serene trust. The leading verb means: Be thou *silent* toward God, O my soul. Emphatic here is the word "*only*." Look to God and to him *only*; to no one else; shut off absolutely all other reliance; settle it deeply in thy soul that no other help is to be thought of. His is all-sufficient; none other can avail to the least purpose whatever.

8. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.

David's faith had been so richly joyous to his own soul, and had brought him such salvation over his personal enemies, that he can now commend it most heartily to all people in all their possible emergencies. O, all ye people of every name and of all conditions—at all times, under whatever trials or straits—pour out your heart before this great and bountiful God. He is a refuge for all who put their trust in him. Pause and think of it! Burdened hearts will here find their burdens lifted; desolate hearts will be cheered; the sad will be made joyful; the lost will be saved, in the love and the might of this perfect Savior.

9. Surely men of low degree *are* vanity, *and* men of high degree *are* a lie: to be laid in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.

Only [better than "surely"], "only a vanity are the sons of mortals; only a lie are the sons of mighty men; in the scales to go up," *i. e.*, destined or sure to *mount up* if put on the scales.

All these together are less [lighter] than a breath. Two Hebrew words for man—the man of the earth, frail; and the man in power and dignity, commanding—are brought together here to give force to this statement: that all men alike—the least or the greatest—are less than a breath when measured against the Great God.

10. Trust not in oppression, and become not vain in robbery: if riches increase, set not your heart *upon them.*

Do not think to accomplish your ends of wealth or power by oppression; indulge no vain hope of good from robbery; for how can you prosper in the end, arrayed in the wrong against the Mighty God?——The historical reference, if any, in these words, is not apparent. But it is easy to see that the main doctrine of the Psalm is applied here to the great mass of human activities in ordinary life. Take care that ye do not pursue worldly good in ways that God must abhor, and will sooner or later frustrate and terribly punish!

11. God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power *belongeth* unto God.

12. Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy: for thou renderest to every man according to his work.

"One thing" [not, "at *one time*"] "God hath said; these two things have I heard, [*i. e.*, from him]; viz., that power is to God, and that to thee, O Lord, is mercy, for thou dost render to man according to his works." These great central truths in respect to God and his ways with man were impressively revealed to the ancients of David's time, and indeed to the ages long before. They are here because they bear strongly on the points contemplated in this Psalm. This Great God, of boundless power, and of blended justice and mercy, will for evermore take cognizance of the moral life of his creature man. Let none think to evade his judgments! Let the most hardened sinner stand in awe before this great and holy God! To all who wait before him in silent reverence and obedient trust, it shall be well; but woe to him who recklessly disowns his authority and tramples on his law!

PSALM LXIII.

The statement prefixed here, "A Psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah," leaves the question still open between his wanderings when fleeing before Saul, and his flight before Absalom. During the former, he was often secreting himself in that wilderness; in the history of the latter, occur several allusions to his being in this wilderness. See 2 Sam. 15: 23, 28, and 16: 2, and 17: 16. The question, however, is substantially settled in favor of the times of Absalom: (*a*) by the reference to "the king,"

(v. 11), which could scarcely be said of himself in a Psalm referring to the times of Saul, but is entirely in place for the times of Absalom; (see also Ps. 61: 6); (*b*) by the strong points in common between this Psalm and others which belong to the later persecution. Notice especially his longing for the house of God and its worship, as one who had been at home there for many sweet years of life. Compare vs. 1, 2 with Ps. 42: 1–4, and 61: 2–4. We may therefore assign this Psalm to the times of Absalom's conspiracy.

1. O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;

2. To see thy power and thy glory, so *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

In this hour of extremest trial, when his own son heads a powerful rebellion, and hosts of his old friends forsake him and combine to sustain this uprising, his soul turns to his God as to his best and only capable Helper. "Thou art *my* God"—with a precious emphasis on "*my;*" I will seek thee both early and earnestly—with the early dawn of morning, and as those do who are up betimes to indulge the most yearning desire of their heart. Thirst in the dry wilderness; his very body and soul fainting and longing for God, as the parched tongue for water—set forth his case. O might he see God's power and glory revealed here and now in his behalf, as he had often heard of, and virtually seen, in the worship of the sanctuary, where the glorious deeds of Israel's God, in ancient days, had been the theme of speech and song. It was not precisely that those deeds of power and glory had been *done* in the sanctuary, but that they had been brought to mind there—reproduced and re-impressed amid those scenes of worship.

3. Because thy loving-kindness *is* better than life, my lips shall praise thee.

4. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name.

"Better than life"—not merely than such a life as this here in the desert, but better than *any* life—better than life itself, thought of as what men most desire and love. Because thy loving-kindness is so precious my lips shall praise thee; I will bless [honor and praise] thee, long as I live.——To "lift up the hands" toward God indicates prayer; perhaps praise also. "In thy name"—in honor of it, and in appropriate worship. See Ps. 28: 2.

5. My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise *thee* with joyful lips.

6. When I remember thee upon my bed, *and* meditate on thee in the *night* watches.

7. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.

Assuming that at this stage of his experiences he is yet in the wilderness; weariness and thirst upon him; the great issue of battle still pending; nothing to assure him of victory except God's faithfulness in promise and his strong arm, it was a bold thing for David to say—"My soul shall be satisfied as with most luxurious food, my mouth shall praise thee with lips of joy" as I think of thee in the dead of night, and all this because thou *hast in other days* been my Almighty helper. I know thy wing is outspread over me. Why shall not this be all-sufficient for my protection in future and for my peace and even joy through these nights and days of sternest peril and most critical exigency?

8. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.

My soul *cleaveth* to thee, following earnestly after thee, for the original words blend these two ideas. I can not let thee go; I cling to thy side, pressing upon thy steps.

9. But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, shall go into the lower parts of the earth.

10. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.

The original leaves it in some doubt whether David means—They seek my life *to their own* destruction; or, as the English version puts it, seek my life to destroy *it*. In the former construction, the two clauses of the verse are parallel in sentiment—which is common Hebrew usage.——"Go into the lower parts of the earth"—the grave, under ground.——Men shall pour them out, or they shall be poured out *upon the hand* of the sword, is the literal rendering; the sense being this—given over to its power.——A portion for *jackals*, rather than "foxes"—animals that prey upon the slain.

11. But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

"The king," is said of himself, but of himself because he was God's anointed. He shall rejoice in God who is ever faithful to his anointed servant.——Every one that sweareth in or by this God of Israel and standeth in allegiance to him instead of turning rebel, shall glory; but the mouth of them that "*speak lies*"—forswearing their oath of allegiance and swearing to the new usurper, shall be violently shut.

PSALM LXIV.

In this Psalm, the short caption, "To the chief musician, a Psalm of David," gives not the least hint of the time or occasion of this writing. Its location, following Psalms (supposably, 61–63, and almost certainly 61 and 63) which refer to the times of Absalom, combines with its obvious fitness to those times to render this date highly probable. Recurring to that history as we have it (2 Sam. 15–17) we shall notice (especially in 2 Sam. 15: 31–37, and 16: 15–25, and 17: 1–14), how very prominently the plans and counsels of that rebellion are brought before us, and how deeply David's heart was affected by the part played therein by his old, long-tried counselor, Ahithophel. It should be noted also that of the two points of advice offered by Ahithophel, the first, the one followed, was not only crafty, sagacious, but horribly Satanic, unutterably heartless as toward his old friend, and as void of purity and honor as can well be imagined. For Absalom's success, doubtless the first thing was to commit his followers beyond all possible retreat—to make the breach between them and their late sovereign too wide to be bridged over again. So Ahithophel counseled Absalom to outrage his father's bed in the presence of all Israel! We are amazed that even political rebellion could have gone down to such a depth of vileness. We shall not wonder that David's soul felt this wrong intensely, and gave some expression in his sacred Psalms, both to his deep reprobation of it and to the moral lessons which God gave men from it in the way of swift retribution upon such monstrous and notorious depravity. ——In this Psalm the central theme is the counselings of his enemies against him; the secrecy and malignity of their plots; their exultation in the assurance of success, coupled with God's swift and terrible retribution under which their schemes recoiled fatally upon themselves—from which result the nation learned something more of God, and the righteous rejoiced with great joy.

1. Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.

The Hebrew word for "prayer" suggests an outflowing from the heart of sighs and moans.——Preserve, not my heart from fearing the enemy, but my life from that which is to be feared—the ruin he plots against me.

2. Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:

3. Who whet their tongue like a sword, *and* bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows, *even* bitter words:

4. That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.

In v. 2 the original word for "insurrection" should mean, either the crowded throng, or the tumult they make; probably the former, with reference to the great numerical force of this uprising under Absalom. It seems that the masses of the people were in it. Then their leading spirits were thought of as traducing the old king, doing their utmost to justify this rebellion by abusing his administration and blackening his character. They whet their tongue as they would a sword; their arrows are bitter words. Ah, how bitter is such fatal slander, aimed not only at the life of this aged and noble king, but at the ruin, politically, morally, religiously, of his realm.——As usual, preparing the bow for immediate use is called "treading the arrow"—the bow being sprung with the foot.——"Shoot at the perfect"—one who is entirely innocent of the charges they bring against him, and therefore, *as to the matter in hand*, perfect, sinless.

5. They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?

Strictly, they *make strong*, not their heart but their *wicked thing*, the vile plot they are consecrating. They consult to hide their snares, etc.

6. They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward *thought* of every one *of them*, and the heart, *is* deep.

They search out the wickedest things possible, as if the highest point of their ambition was to reach the consummation of wickedness.——Instead of our translation, "They accomplish a diligent search," the Hebrew requires the first person plural, thus: "*We* have perfected a well-devised scheme." Dr. Alexander translates: [They say] we are ready—a consummate plan!" The Psalmist closes, saying—Their plans *are* deep laid, etc.

7. But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.

As they had put their arrow to the bow (vs. 3, 4) to shoot suddenly and in secret; so God now suddenly lets fly his arrow at them; and they are the wounded men—they, not those whom they wickedly sought to slay. Literally, the wounds are *their own* —upon themselves. This is retribution—so perfectly in manner like the sin it punishes as to suggest to all mankind why these shafts of the Almighty strike there! This is God's way.

8. So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

Critics differ slightly in the grammatical construction of the first clause, but concur substantially in the thought expressed, viz., that the conspirators spoken of wrought out their own de-

struction by the very schemes of slander and mischief which they concocted for another's ruin. And so they made it (God's arrow, or the ruin it symbolizes) fall upon themselves, even their tongue; *i. e.*, they, personified by their guilty tongue, brought down this recoil of judgment upon themselves.——"Flee away," scattering, the word suggests, as wanderers and vagabonds.

9. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing.

10. The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory.

Perhaps, "shall declare" it to be God's work. They shall have wiser views of his working than ever before. The moral impression upon the nation at large and upon the world shall be wholesome. The righteous shall feel fresh confidence that God will defend their cause against the wicked. All the upright will sympathize with the pious king of Israel in what God has wrought for his deliverance.

PSALM LXV.

The caption, "To the chief Musician, a Psalm and song of David," gives not the least intimation as to the historic occasion of this Psalm. The Psalm itself is equally destitute of any definite historic allusion. It is admirably pertinent to a national thanksgiving for abundant harvests, especially for rain after drought and impending or real famine. There are points in it which would make it appropriate to David's return to his beloved Zion after his flight and exile through fear of Absalom, and doubly so if (as some have supposed) this return were accompanied with rain and plenty after famine. But these points should be regarded as hypothetical only. Fortunately the Psalm loses none of its rare beauty by reason of our uncertainty as to its original adaptation. We may take its sweet words and apply them to very many of the varied scenes of ever shifting human life; for when is God other or less than the Infinite Fountain of all blessings!

1. Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

2. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

According to our Hebrew text, the word translated "waiteth" is a noun, used often in the sense of *silence;* here, of silent *trust.* (See Notes on Ps. 62: 1). "To thee, O God, belong silent trust and grateful praise; these become thee and thou art worthy to receive them from thy worshipers in Zion." "To thee let the vow be performed." This is appropriate to the case of David coming home to the holy city to pay the vow made to God in the day of

his calamity from treason and exile.——Unto God, so well known as the Hearer of prayer, let all the needy come! And their prayer having been answered, let them come yet again with their grateful thank-offering!

3. Iniquities prevail against me: *as for* our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

The Hebrew gives here "Words" [or matters] "of iniquity"—which certainly *may* refer to malignant plots of mischief concocted by Absalom and his party; or might apply to the machinations and slanders of Saul for his destruction.——"Prevail;" are too strong for me in my unaided strength to withstand; but (the implication is) the Lord became my salvation.——"Our transgressions—thou shalt *cover* them;" the usual word for *atone*, hide from view by forgiveness. So far forth as the calamities which befel us were the fruit of our sins, thou hast graciously forgiven the sin, and then relieved us from those calamities. This is the experience of God's children in all ages.

4. Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest, and causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, *even* of thy holy temple.

These words of David become specially impressive considered as said and sung after those sad plaints of a soul thirsting and longing for God in a dry and desolate land far away from the city and sanctuary where God revealed his presence. O blessed the man chosen of God and brought very near, even to dwell in thy courts: O shall we not all be satisfied, (*filled* with satisfying joy, the word means) from the goodness of thy house, that holy temple! But the words bear a precious truth for any and all of the children of God who have known his presence and his love in his earthly sanctuary.

5. *By* terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; *who art* the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off *upon* the sea:

6. Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; *being* girded with power:

7. Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

We can not affirm that in these words David thought of those terrible things in righteousness by which God answered his prayer for life and kingdom when he caused so many thousands of Israel to fall in the dread battle of the wood of Ephraim, and his anguished heart bewailed so bitterly the death of the much loved but guilty Absalom; yet we can see that the words are signally

apposite to those circumstances. It often costs terrible things in righteousness to right the cruel wrongs of earth. Justice is more than precious—it is glorious; but its ministrations of deserved retribution are not seldom "terrible." Yet it is as "the God of our salvation" that he deals such fearful vengeance on guilty oppressors.——Beautifully is he said to be "the confidence of all the ends of the earth"—worthy to be trusted by people of every nation, every clime under the whole heavens! Think of his power! How firmly does he set the mountains on their foundations! How easily can he hush the roar of the ocean and make his breakers quiet! And the tumults of nations with like infinite ease. The surgings of that uprising under Absalom, how speedily did the voice of the Lord hush them into silence!

8. They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

This power is felt to the ends of the earth, for Israel's God is not a merely provincial Deity, as the heathen gods were thought to be, but the true God of the whole wide world.——"The outgoings of the morning and of the evening" should mean primarily the regions of the East where the sun first appears and "goes forth as a bridegroom, rejoicing to run a race," and of the West where he goes from human view; then, secondly, the *people* of those extreme quarters of the earth—which is the sense here. Thou glorious God givest joy to all the living, even to the most remote and least known regions of the earth.

9. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, *which* is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

10. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

It is God and not Nature apart from God, who visits the earth with rain and in the rain. The "river of God" like "mountain of God," is a great river, a stream swollen with his own powerful rains.——"Thou wilt prepare their corn when thou shalt have so prepared *it* (the earth) to produce it." The two verbs which I translate *prepare* are in Hebrew the same one. God insures corn by first insuring the fertility of the earth.——The first two verbs in v. 10 may be taken as imperatives: "Its furrows drench, its ridges beat down;" with showers thou wilt make it soft and so bless its vegetating forces—the upspringing of the young plants toward maturity. A fine poetic description of the effect of timely showers upon vegetation.

11. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

12. They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side.

13. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

In the first clause, perhaps better thus: "Thou crownest the year of thy goodness," *i. e.*, the year which thou art pleased to bless with abundant fertility; "thy paths"—the footsteps of thy going forth upon the face of the fields—"drop with fatness"—most luxuriant fertility.——"The pastures of the wilderness"—such there were, for in the life and language of Palestine, the wilderness was not a sterile desert, but a hilly, rough country, unsuitable for tillage, but often fine for pasturage. These pastures are clothed with flocks. Poetically, the hills "gird on joy" as the maiden girds about her robes of beauty. Pastures glorying in their flocks, valleys waving with yellow grain, join the chorus of song in praise to their great Maker. Do they sympathize with the glad hearts of the hungry household and lead off in praise to Him who gives them their burdens of blessing? How much more should man, so blessed, remember intelligently the ever present hand of his well known Father.——High above the poetic beauty of this exquisite Psalm is the moral beauty of the sentiment which sees God himself and not Nature only nor her so-called "laws," in the rains, the green pastures, and the valleys covered over with corn. It is *God* who visits the earth, it is the river of God which bears along the copious waters; "*Thou* makest it soft with showers;" *Thou* blessest the springing up of its vegetable growths; it is *thy* paths—thine own very footsteps over our fields—that distill fatness and abundance; it is unto *Thee* most appropriately that pastures and valleys shout the chorus of praise and sing for joy! Every thing full of God; his hand and his footsteps every-where. There is no chill of a heartless and Godless philosophy, falsely so-called, on the heart of this inspired poet; his glowing soul is warmed by the felt presence of an active, energizing God whose handiwork and whose blessed footsteps he sees in every thing that grows and in every agency that makes growth and beauty and fruitfulness on the face of this fair world.

By a very interesting but logical process, Isaac Taylor infers from this Psalm the general culture, the tastes, and the piety of the Hebrew people of David's time. The data given are the Psalm itself; the fact that it was sung in the public worship of the sanctuary before and by the assembled thousands of Israel—sung manifestly with spirit and enthusiasm; with intelligence therefore, and with some adequate conception of its sentiments. Now, could a people in whose national literature such a Psalm has a prominent place—nay more, in whose liturgy, in whose stated

worship it has its cherished place; on whose annual thanksgiving festival, the great feast of the tabernacles, we may suppose it formed the center and culminating point of their enthusiasm—could a people so trained, capable of being charmed by the poetry of such a song and of being lifted heavenward and Godward by its divine sympathies and its recognition of an ever present God, be only a "horde of rude and ignorant barbarians?"

PSALM LXVI.

The caption here names no author; alludes to no historic occasion. We have only: "To the chief Musician; a Song, a Psalm." In quite an unusual degree the scope of this Psalm seems to be general rather than specific, witnessing to the glory of God's works of deliverance wrought for his people in ancient times, as at the Red Sea and the Jordan; inferring thence his worthiness to be exalted and extolled in the praises, not of Israel alone, but of all the nations; with impressive allusion to his chastening hand upon his people for their discipline; from which, humbled and proved, they found mercy in answer to prayer, and then bore witness to the loving faithfulness of their God.——It is noticeable that throughout vs. 6–12, the writer speaks in the first person plural—"we," "our," "us;" but in vs. 13–20, altogether in the singular, as if giving his own personal experiences only. But no speciality of meaning is intended by this variety. Every reader, every singer of this song, may make these words his own.——Some critics suggest that the strain of this Psalm corresponds so well with that of Ps. 46, that it may probably be referred to the same date and occasion. It seems to me equally probable that it bears a close relation, in time and purpose, to the 65th—a view, which in the absence of other evidence either way, its proximity favors. But we must be content to affirm nothing positively on this question.

1. Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands:
2. Sing forth the honor of his name: make his praise glorious.

The English word "noise" has some unpleasant associations, of which the Hebrew word here used is innocent. It denotes none but joyous sounds, in glad earnest, from full hearts. The call for such joyous acclaim is not to Israel only, but to all lands, and rightly—for the God of Israel is the God of every land, of all the nations. This great fact their psalmody was careful not to overlook.——"Make his praise glorious"—literally, a glorious thing, a glory; let it be such as will give the Great God distinctive and peculiar honor, high above all other honor and glory.

3. Say unto God, How terrible *art thou in* thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

4. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing *to* thy name. Selah.

How should thy works impress the nations with fear and awe, as toward One whose power none can withstand! The Hebrew word is the common one for the fear and reverence due to God.——"Submit themselves"—in the sense of straining the truth in order to secure terms of peace—the case of the Gibeonites toward Joshua (Josh. 9) being a standing example. The Psalmist would not recommend a false and treacherous submission, but puts in strong light the impression of his resistless power, which God has made upon the nations. David has the same word in the same sense (Ps. 18: 44).——All the earth shall worship thee, the true God, in songs of heart-felt homage, celebrating thy name with intelligent appreciation of its significance, *i. e.*, with worship, neither blind as to their intelligence, nor forced as to their will.——This glorious prophecy stands here as if it rested on God's infinite worthiness of such homage. Let it be the gladness of our hearts that One so supremely worthy of the pure, intelligent homage of "all the earth" has fully purposed to secure it, some day; it lies in the counsels of his blessed will, and can not fail of ultimate accomplishment.——"Selah;" we can afford to pause and dwell on a truth so inspiring, so precious!

5. Come and see the works of God: *he is* terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men.

6. He turned the sea into dry *land:* they went through the flood on foot: there did we rejoice in him.

Resuming the thought of v. 3, the Psalmist invites us to look more considerately on those glorious achievements of Israel's God. "Terrible"—the same word here as there.——The first reference is to the Red Sea; the next to the passage of the Jordan, here called the "flood," but in the Hebrew *the river*, yet always in the sense of a great river. Did not we—the whole nation saved by the very arm of our Almighty King—rejoice in him there? So the song of Moses and Miriam on the hither shore of the Sea witnessed. (Ex. 15: 1–22).

7. He ruleth by his power forever; his eyes behold the nations: let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

Those deeds of the Red Sea and the Jordan were no spasmodic, transient outburst of power, but indicate a rule and sway that are indeed eternal, abiding, evermore sustained, and never waning.——His eyes *look into* the nations, piercing, scanning perfectly. Let rebels never lift up themselves against him!

8. O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard:

9. Which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved.

In the phrase, "holdeth our soul in life," the Hebrew verb has the sense, to set or put as a special act, and does not suggest that constant divine agency in sustaining human life which our English version seems to imply. I take it to mean: Who lifts us from peril akin to death into safety and well-being, real life. So the next clause: Does not permit us to be jostled and thrown down from our standing.

10. For thou, O God, hast proved us: thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.

11. Thou broughtest us into the net; thou laidest affliction upon our loins.

12. Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place*.

Here are special illustrations of this general law of God's dealings with his people, introduced by "*for*." In chastisement for moral discipline, God had tried and proved his people; bringing them into cruel subjection to oppressors; but when they had become penitent, he brought them again into abundance.—— "Caused men to ride over our heads" is rather to ride *at our head*, in power over us and we in subjection. "Through fire and through water"—figures of sore national calamity. "A wealthy place." The Hebrew word occurs elsewhere only in Ps. 23: 5; "My cup runneth over"—is abundance itself. It indicates prosperity and plenty with allusion to abundant *moisture*—so essential in the climate of Palestine.

13. I will go into thy house with burnt offerings: I will pay thee my vows,

14. Which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.

15. I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings, with the incense of rams: I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.

The pious Israelite found in the law of Moses what sacrifices and offerings were appropriate to express his gratitude to God for deliverance from affliction. The mercy that turned his sorrow to joy—that lifted his burden off and brought him peace and rest, was in principle the same thing to the individual as to the nation. Hence the transition from what seems to be national history in vs. 8–12 to individual experience in vs. 13–20 is by no means violent, for it involves only the same universal law of God's moral administration.

16. Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what he hath done for my soul.

17. I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue.

Beautifully he invites all the pious to hear him testify how divine mercy heard his prayer and gave him the richest of blessings.——"Done for my soul"—but the constant use of this Hebrew word for "soul" in the sense of *life* demands a broader application here than to merely spiritual blessings. "Done for my *life*" is the more exact rendering.——"Extolled with my tongue," but literally, praise was under my tongue—praise in the sense of extolling him high in esteem and glory.

18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear *me:*

19. *But* verily God hath heard *me;* he hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

20. Blessed *be* God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.

The closer rendering is—"If I had regarded iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have heard me." But verily he has heard me, and I bless his name for it, and put my case before all that fear him both to encourage and to guide them in their prayer. The Great and Holy God looks for a sincere and honest heart in those who bow the knee before him, and will hear none else.

PSALM LXVII.

This Psalm, short but rich, stands before us with no hint as to its author or date, and with no allusions which can throw the least light upon its occasion except that v. 6 refers to an abundant harvest. The verb there is in the past tense—"The earth *has* yielded her increase." This therefore may be a thanksgiving song for a bountiful harvest—upon which fact is built the prayer and the prophecy that He who has shown such mercy and such power to save, will also bathe all the nations with his light and glory, and fill them with the blessings of his salvation.

1. God be merciful unto us, and bless us; *and* cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.

2. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.

"Cause his face to shine upon us," with face not averted in wrath but turned toward us, beaming with kindness. Nothing can be more plain or more pertinent and beautiful than this figure. As the human face reveals the human heart, so is God's face

assumed to reveal his. This language seems to be an imitation of the doxology prescribed for the priests (Num. 6: 23–27).——This light of God's face is thought of also as bringing to us the knowledge of himself and of his moral government over men—"That thy *way* may be known upon the earth," toward all the sons of men.——The rare phrase, "saving health," translates the one usual Hebrew word for *salvation*. It can mean nothing more or other than that here. What the translators of our version meant beyond or different from this does not appear. The prayer is that all the nations may become acquainted with the salvation which God has provided for them.

3. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

The English word "people" faithfully translates the Hebrew, since the latter admits of being applied to God's chosen Israel, and also of being used for all the inhabitants of the world. "*All* the people" must of course have this widest possible sense. The Psalmist therefore exhorts all the nations of men to recognize the true God and render him due homage and praise.

4. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah.

Well may they all rejoice and sing with exceeding joy because this great and righteous God rules so perfectly, evermore judging righteously. The word for "govern" is primarily *lead*, *i. e.*, to take charge of them as a shepherd of his flock, to guide their steps, shape their welfare, control their destinies.

5. Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.

6. *Then* shall the earth yield her increase; *and* God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.

7. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.

The refrain of this sweet song is this summons of all the people to praise.——As said above, the tense here is not future but past, with no word corresponding to "then." "The earth *has* produced her increase;" and since special mention is made of this, we may assume the production to have been abundant and a fit occasion for thanksgiving as well as a ground of assurance that the same beneficent God would fill the world with his blessings and bring all the ends of the earth to fear and praise his name.——As we have had occasion to notice repeatedly, the religion of Israel was no narrow, exclusive thing. Though the center of its worship was Jerusalem, its circumference embraced all the nations of the earth. Its thought was—The God we worship is no provincial

Deity, such as other nations distinctly recognized their little gods to be, but is the God of all the earth, the Great Maker and Ruler of all; and he will surely assert his rights in due time and bring all the nations to know himself, and to give him the loving worship of obedient, grateful, adoring hearts.

PSALM LXVIII

This Psalm is ascribed to David. Its key-note is in striking harmony with that of the three Psalms next preceding—*high praises to the God of Israel;* in which not only all of Israel but all the nations of the earth are summoned to join. In the special point of being a *résumé* or recapitulation of the prominent manifestations of God's power and goodness toward Israel, this Psalm resembles Ps. 18—with this main difference, that whereas that Psalm pertains specially to the personal history of David, this gives in general the history of God's ways with the entire Hebrew nation.——As to its date and special occasion, some have located it "at the removing of the ark." But it does not seem to be parallel with Ps. 24 and 2 Sam. 6.——Others assume (on their interpretation of 2 Sam. 11: 11) that the ark was with the army of Joab at the final conquest of Ammon and of its stronghold, Rabbah (2 Sam. 12: 26–31), and that this song was composed to be sung upon its victorious re-establishment in Mt. Zion. In my view, this theory that the ark itself went to the field of war lacks support. But the fact that this was the last recorded war of conquest waged by David against his national enemies favors the date of this Psalm upon this occasion. Its allusion to several tribes other than Judah (v. 27) forbids our placing it later than the revolt; earlier than David no critic would think of placing it.

1. Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.

The point to be specially noted here is that these are the very words used by Moses in the wilderness when the ark was taken up and moved forward at the head of the marshaled hosts of Israel (Num. 10: 35). This seems to have been the customary announcement on every such occasion. When it rested the form was, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." As the ark bore upon and over it the visible symbol of Jehovah's presence, it was pertinent to speak of God as arising in his power and majesty whenever the ark was taken up, and as returning to his rest among his people when the ark rested.——Here the Psalmist continues the thought: Let God *so* arise in the manifestations of his power that his haters shall flee before him.

2. As smoke is driven away, *so* drive *them* away: as wax

melteth before the fire, *so* let the wicked perish at the presence of God.

The figures are of the plainest: As high winds drive the smoke and fire melts wax, so let the wicked perish before thy presence. Of course wicked men are thought of as opposing God with malign effort to thwart his plans, break down his kingdom, withstand his work of grace toward his people. Why should not the Great Father protect his children and indeed all his creatures against whatever Satan may devise and Satan's servants attempt for their destruction?

3. But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God: yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.

Be glad that *such a God* reigns—reigns so wisely, so benevolently, so gloriously! Let his people rejoice exceedingly that opposition against his throne can harm none but the opposers themselves.

4. Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

"Extol him that rideth upon the heavens" is magnificent poetry; but critical justice to David and to his Hebrew words compels us to translate, "Cast up the highway for him who rideth in the desert," etc.—the conception being the same which appears in Isa. 57: 14, and 62: 10, and essentially in Isa. 40: 3, 4. The God of Israel is thought of as marching at the head of his people through the Arabian desert; before whom, therefore, as before other kings in like circumstances, a highway should be cast up; mountains leveled; valleys filled; the crooked made straight and the rough smooth—for his march.——"By his name Jah"—a contraction for Jehovah, the earliest appearance of which is in the song of Moses and Miriam (Ex. 15: 2).

5. A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, *is* God in his holy habitation.

6. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry *land*.

To his high and perpetual glory, the God of Israel is the Refuge and salvation of the needy and friendless. V. 6 applies this general principle to the special case of Israel brought forth from Egypt and ultimately planted in Canaan.——"The solitary set in families" are rather the lonely, the unbefriended and homeless ones, made to dwell in houses—the change of condition from Egypt to Canaan, and not as some have supposed, from a state of celibacy to the domestic condition of families.——The middle clause of v. 6 should be read—"The captives he *brought* forth into prosperity,"

with the same reference to Egyptian bondage, exchanged for the blessings of Canaan. The word which our translators made "chains" is now generally admitted to mean good fortune, all good things.——"Only the rebellious abide in a sun-burnt land." For such and such only, God has no favors.

7. O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people, when thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah:

8. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: *even* Sinai itself *was moved* at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

Sublimely God is here thought of as marching in his pillar of cloud and fire at the head of his marshaled people from Egypt through the wilderness, manifesting his presence pre-eminently on Sinai. Then and there "the earth shook" (See Ex. 19: 16–18); "the heavens *dripped*" rather than "dropped"—the fearful thunderings being at least conceived of as accompanied by rain as usual.——The original words, "this Sinai" [or "that Sinai"], are construed by some as a parenthesis—this was at Sinai; but by others supplying the verb "shook" from the beginning of the verse—which latter seems more in the line of thought, thus: Even that well known Mt. Sinai shook and trembled exceedingly—a fact which the records of Moses made very prominent.

9. Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain, whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance, when it was weary.

Good critics are sharply divided on the question whether the two Hebrew words translated "plentiful rain" (literally a rain of abundance or a rain of free gifts) refer precisely to a great rain, or to a gracious bestowment of various blessings, *e. g.*, Manna; quails; water from the rock, etc. The connection shows that these were the blessings given the people in their wilderness life. The facts of the case therefore favor the latter construction, and so also does the fact that the verb for "send" is a sacrificial term, "*wave*," used continually of the "wave-offering." God *waved* over them his full hand laden with various and precious blessings. The Hebrew word for "plentiful" is a noun borrowed also from the sacrificial vocabulary—the *free-will offerings*. The fact that both these contiguous words suggest the sacrificial system strongly favors the construction above preferred.——The Hebrew noun for rain * always means of itself a great rain. How often when God's people [his "inheritance"] were weary, did he refresh them, not precisely with rain, but with these various gifts of his miraculous hand!

10. Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

"Thy congregation"—a word quite unusual in this sense, mean-

ing primarily a living *animal;* then, a flock; and here, God's flock, his chosen people of whom he was Shepherd. They have dwelt in it [Canaan]; thou hast provided and wilt still in the same way for thy needy ones. The last verb is future, implying confidence in God's future and perpetual protection.

11. The Lord gave the word: great *was* the company of those that published *it.*

The thought of the poet is on the conquest of Canaan. "The Lord gave the word"—but this can not well be the word of command for the battle, but rather the word of summons to the victor's song. I assume this from the suggestive words that follow—"the women who shouted the glad news were a great host." This is expressed by one Hebrew participle which is feminine, referring therefore to women; it means, to proclaim glad tidings, and must mean here the glad tidings of victory. For the historic custom—women singing songs of victory, See Ex. 15: 20; Judg. 5 and 11: 34, and 1 Sam. 18: 6, and 21: 11, and 29; 5.——Some points of the song follow.

12. Kings of armies did flee apace: and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.

Kings heading great armies [Hebrew *hosts*] fled; they *fled*; *i. e.*, fled in consternation; were completely routed. The matrons, remaining securely at home shared the spoil—this being the usual custom when the rout was so entire that no enemy remained to be feared.

13. Though ye have lain among the pots, *yet shall ye be as* the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold.

There seems to be not the least authority for the translation, "pots." The word occurs in Hebrew use in the sense of *stalls* for cattle, places provided for them to stand, sheltered securely. The word is here in the dual number, the sense being: When [after these great victories over the kings of Canaan] ye shall lie reposing among or between the stalls for your cattle, in the quiet of pastoral life, "ye shall be like the wings of a dove tipped with silver, and her feathers with the yellowness of gold"—silver and gold becoming suddenly abundant from the spoils of the conquered Canaanites.

14. When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was *white* as snow in Salmon.

The same "kings" referred to in v. 12, "scattered" in those fearful routes recorded Josh. 10 and 11. "In *it*"—the land of Canaan.——"It snowed in Salmon" or Zalmon—a low mountain spoken of Judg. 9: 48, deeply wooded, and therefore densely shaded, from which fact it takes its name. But as to the exact

import of these words, critics are divided, some saying: The change in your condition is like that when the brightness of snow blends with the deep shades of the forest; others: the bleaching bones of the slain Canaanites are as snow on Zalmon. To the latter it might be objected that it takes time for the bones of slaughtered armies to assume this appearance. Also, that the context demands the sense of joy after sorrow, to the victorious Hebrews.

15. The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan; a high hill *as* the hill of Bashan.

16. Why leap ye, ye high hills? *this is* the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in; yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* forever.

God's hill can be no other than Zion—the hill God had chosen for his dwelling-place among his people. "Bashan," east of the Jordan, was physically loftier, more grand; but still, the glory of God's presence on Zion made it surpass Mt. Bashan indefinitely.—— "An high hill" is more precisely a hill of lofty peaks, high headlands.——"Why leap ye?" fails to give the sense of the Hebrew, which is: Why do ye look askance, invidiously, ye higher mountains? Why do ye envy Mt. Zion this rare distinction of being the chosen mount of God? It bears this honor, simply because God has chosen it (in the love of his heart for it, for the Hebrew word involves this thought); yea, Jehovah (not merely Elohim, but Jehovah), the covenant-keeping God of Israel, will make it his dwelling forever. Such transitions from the name Elohim to the name Lord (Jehovah), must not be attributed to chance or to a taste for variety. We must find the reason in its special significance as a name of God.

17. The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands of angels: the Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place.*

Those kings of Canaan were fully up to their times in the art of war. They were especially strong in war-chariots, of which Jabin of Hazor had nine hundred, iron-armed. See also Judg. 1: 19, and Josh. 11: 4, 6, 9. The same was true of David's most powerful enemies (2 Sam. 8: 4, and 10: 18). Hence when the Poet-Psalmist would set forth the might of Jehovah as against them, he measures his power by his war-chariots—"two myriads; thousands repeated," *i. e.*, re-duplicated indefinitely; and, more than all, the Jehovah *in* them, as at Sinai, the holy mountain. There is no Hebrew word here which can suggest the idea of "angels." The words used set forth the immense number of his war-chariots—the object being to show that, in the point of their chief glory, he was infinitely above them.——Angels seem to have been present in the scenes of Sinai (see Deut. 33: 2, and Acts 7:

53, Gal. 3: 19, and Heb. 2: 2), although the history given in Exodus omits to mention it.

18. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them.*

After a great victory, the conquering king returns in pomp to his capital and throne; with his captives and his spoils [here "gifts"] a portion of which he is wont to distribute among his most deserving officers and men. The phraseology here rests on this usage of ancient conquerors. The God of Israel, conqueror in these wars of Canaan, and last, in these closing wars of David's reign, now ascends to his throne on high; he leads his captives into captivity; he has received gifts among and even from rebels—gifts and presents made in pledge of their submission to his rightful authority; so that now his dominion is re-established over them and he can dwell again among them—their recognized King and Lord. The giving of gifts to men, or receiving them *for* men, *i. e.*, to be given to them, seems to be a secondary idea, not explicitly involved in the words of the text here, but inferable from the usage of military conquerors. Paul (Eph. 4: 8–12) finds here words which apply happily to the victory over Satan and sin, achieved by Jesus Christ in his death, and to his triumphant ascension to his throne in the heavens, thenceforward to dispense among men the gifts of his grace and the gifts of its human instrumentalities as well. Without doubt the words apply well to these great facts in regard to Jesus Christ; but this falls short of proving this Psalm to be a prophecy of Christ. The great laws of God's administration over men are the same in each of these cases—a fact which sufficiently accounts for the facility with which the words of the earlier case apply also to the later.

19. Blessed *be* the Lord, *who* daily loadeth us *with benefits, even* the God of our salvation. Selah.

Critics differ as to the sense of the verb translated "loadeth." * The word occurs most frequently in the bad sense of imposing a burden. The original, moreover, has no word for "benefits." Some therefore construct thus: "Blessed be the Lord day by day; whoever imposes burdens, God is our salvation." Others, as our English version: "He who loads us every day" [with blessings] "is the God of our salvation." The latter seems to me the more easy and probable construction.

20. *He that is* our God *is* the God of salvation; and unto GOD the Lord *belong* the issues from death.

21. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, *and*

.he hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.

"The issues of death"—the goings forth from under his power. It is God's prerogative to bring his people up from the perils and power of death when he will—which is said here with special reference to the imminent perils of natural destruction from which God had preserved his people.——"God shall wound the head," etc., but the Hebrew is stronger: shall crush or smite through and through.

22. The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea:

23. That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies, *and* the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

What God will do *with his enemies* is the subject, both in v. 21 and in v. 23, and therefore we can not without violence make v. 22 speak of God's people. The Hebrew has no word corresponding to "my people" as it stands in the English version. The sentiment, therefore, must be—I, the Lord, will bring back thy fleeing and concealed enemies from the mountain fastnesses of Bashan or from the depths of the sea, that thou mayest utterly break their power. The supposition that God's enemies hide for fear of him in the depths of the sea appears again in Amos 9: 3: "Though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent and he shall bite them."——"That thou mayest stir thy foot in the blood of thine enemies and the tongue of thy dogs also"—which gives a strong view of their utterly subduing their foes, tramping their slain bodies beneath their feet. War has its scenes of horror; and when human war becomes the symbol of the judgments God brings on his persistent enemies, nothing less than scenes of appalling terror and woe can set forth the truth of the case.

24. They have seen thy goings, O God; *even* the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.

25. The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* after; among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.

The "goings forth" of God here thought of are those in which he went forth at the head of the hosts of Israel, and by his providential agencies, smote and subdued their enemies. Then he went forth *from* his sanctuary; these goings forth were fitly celebrated *in* the sanctuary after the victory was won. We have the grand procession here in view; the singers leading the train; the instrumental performers next; and all these *in the midst* of damsels playing the timbrel. This seems to be precisely what the Hebrew words mean; not that the damsels mingled *among* the other two classes, but that the other classes named were in the

center and the damsels in the outer circle. The custom of damsels beating the timbrel in joyous processions prevails still in the East.

26. Bless ye God in the congregations, *even* the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

Bless God not only in your families and in your closets, but in the great congregation as here; yea, bless your own Jehovah all ye who are of the fountain of Israel—the line of posterity being thought of as a stream issuing from a fountain; Abraham and the patriarchs, the fountain-head; and this great nation the outflowing waters therefrom. See similar figures Isaiah 48: 1, and 51: 1.

27. There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler, the princes of Judah *and* their council, the princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali.

Here the object seems to be to give vividness to the picture by specifying the leading tribes, first from the Southern part of the land; then from the Northern. Benjamin is "little" as being the youngest of the twelve sons of Jacob, yet his tribe furnished the first king (Saul), and his territory gave the site for the holy city. "There is little Benjamin, ruling them."——The Hebrew word that follows "the princes of Judah"—standing, in our version, "and their council"—is difficult. Literally, it is, *their stone-heap*, which Dr. Alexander changes to "*stoning them*," with allusion to David's victory over Goliah. Others, dropping out the idea of *stone*, make it their troop, their host. May it not be akin to the use of "stone" in Gen. 49: 24—"From thence is the shepherd, the *stone* of Israel?" The rock is a common symbol of strength, firmness.——The Septuagint has it, Their leaders.

28. Thy God hath commanded thy strength: strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us.

God hath ordained that thou shouldest be strong; still, O God, make thy work wrought for us yet more strong—a prayer for more of the same divine aid through which they had conquered of old.

29. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents unto thee.

Because God had located his temple and earthly throne at Jerusalem, the kings of the nations should bring to that place their gifts in honor of his name. The same idea re-appears often in Isaiah (see 18: 7, and 49: 23, and 60: 5–13, and 66: 12).

30. Rebuke the company of spearmen, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people, *till every one* submit himself with pieces of silver: scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.

This is a prayer that God would overthrow their mightiest foes

"The company of spearmen"—better "the beast of the reeds," the wild beast, probably the crocodile who makes his home in the dense thicket of reeds along the river's shore; said in reference to Egypt, more than once symbolized by its crocodile.——"Bulls"—mighty men, princes. "With calves" fills out the picture by suggesting their subordinates—including therefore the leaders and the led; the captains and their men, making their submission with tribute money.——The last clause is not a prayer, but a prophecy, built on history: Thou *hast scattered* the war-loving nation, and thou wilt yet again.

31. Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

"Princes;" literally, the fat, rich ones; but in the sense of princes, men first in power. They shall come out of Egypt to Jerusalem as promised above (v. 29) to bring thither their offerings to the true God. So Isaiah (19: 21, 22).——Ethiopia shall hasten her hands toward God; literally, make them run. Lifting up the hands to God is with the Psalmist an act of worship, yet probably in this connection involving the presentation of her gifts to the God of Israel.

32. Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises unto the LORD; Selah:

33. To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, *which were* of old; lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.

Inspired by this prophetic scene, the Psalmist calls on all the kingdoms of the earth to sing the praises of the mighty God who rideth in state upon the heaven of heavens—the summit of the ancient heavens; higher than which no words of man can express or imagination conceive. A God so great and glorious justly commands the homage of the wide world. It is in his eternal purpose to secure in due time the universal homage of the nations.

34. Ascribe ye strength unto God: his excellency *is* over Israel, and his strength *is* in the clouds.

35. O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places: the God of Israel *is* he that giveth strength and power unto his people. Blessed *be* God.

Acknowledge his infinite power; recognize it with your highest praises. His excellent majesty rests upon Israel, in the sense of being displayed in her salvation. Then in sublimest words the song closes with ascriptions of highest glory and power to the God of Israel. Think of this Psalm as sung by the vast choir of the temple, sustained by players on instruments and damsels beating timbrels and many thousand hearts and voices in the grand concert—was it not magnificent? May we not hope it had an inspiring power to impress the masses with these sublime and glo-

rious truths pertaining to the God of their salvation, the High and Lofty One whose throne they thought of as in the heaven of heavens and yet whose dwelling-place was also within their sacred tent—a visible Glory upon the ark of the covenant?

PSALM LXIX.

The caption ascribes this Psalm to David, with the addition of the words "Upon Shoshannim;" which we have seen at the head of Ps. 45 and 60. The common significance of these words—"upon [or concerning] lilies," seems less appropriate here than in the other Psalms. It must be admitted that obscurity rests on some, not to say many, of these Hebrew phrases which appear in the captions to the Psalms.——In this Psalm a sufferer sets forth his own case—a sufferer who is religious, prayerful, in sympathy with God, and suffering in part at least because he is godly, yet one who confesses his sin (v. 5). He dwells on the reproaches cast upon him, implores God's interposing arm for his deliverance; prays that righteous retribution may come upon the common enemies of himself and of his God; and rejoices in the assurance that God will hear his prayer, vindicate his own cause and that of his servant, and remember his Zion to befriend his people.——At this stage it should be noted that several phrases which occur in this Psalm are applied in the New Testament to Christ and to points in his history—*e. g.*, v. 4, "They that hate me without a cause," in Jn. 15: 25;——v. 9, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up," in Jn. 2: 17. The last clause of the same verse, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me," is applied to Christ by Paul (Rom. 15: 3).——Also with v. 21. "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," compare Matt. 27: 34, 48 and John 19: 28, 29; and with v. 25: "Let their habitation be desolate," compare Ac. 1: 20.——In view of these quotations and allusions we have three distinct theories of construction for this Psalm, between which to make our choice: (1) That these are the words of the historic David writing primarily and properly of himself, giving his own experience under his circumstances at some certain point of his history; or (2) of David describing an ideal sufferer, and therefore purposely saying things which may apply in general to all Christian sufferers in such a world as this, and perhaps pre-eminently to Christ, their great representative; or (3) of David carrying along in his mind both his own case, and by the inspiration of prophecy, that of Christ, saying some things which apply to himself only; other things applicable to Christ only; and yet other things equally applicable to both.——All these theories have their advocates. In my view the first is encumbered with far less difficulty than either the second or the third. To the second the great objection is that it is *unnatural*—a way of writing that nobody uses, and therefore a theory

which critics can reasonably adopt only when nothing else can be found to meet the emergency. The third is most uncomfortably vague and uncertain, requiring indeed a second revelation to show what the revelation in this Psalm means; and therefore should in my view be rejected.——The first theory—that these are words of the historic David, said properly of himself—harmonizes without difficulty with the quotations above referred to on the principle of words borrowed from this Psalm because they fitly expressed the ideas which the New Testament writers wished to express. In some of these cases it is obvious that what they saw in Christ simply *suggested* the words of this Psalm. Thus when Jesus so resolutely drove out the traffickers from the temple, his disciples remembered that it was written, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up." His case suggested these words, not necessarily as a prophecy, but as appropriate. This principle covers all the other cases in this Psalm, and therefore leaves none which we are compelled to regard as real prophecy, referring to Jesus Christ in its primary and proper sense.——Fatally against the theory that would make this entire Psalm refer to Christ is the confession of "folly" and "guilt" (v. 5).——Assuming that the historic David speaks here, we have only to inquire of what period in his personal history he is speaking. The Psalm itself lacks very positive indications. Its *place* however, near the close of this second of the five original books of the Psalms, contiguous to Ps. 70 which is essentially the latter portion of Ps. 40; and to Ps. 71 which beyond all question belongs to the old age of David, renders it highly probable that the date falls within his last scene of trial, viz., that from the conspiracy of Adonijah. This view is still strengthened by the similar location of Psalms pertaining to the same period just at the close of the first book. See preliminary Notes on Ps. 38: 39, and 41. The first book of Psalms (1—41) being made up almost if not quite exclusively of Psalms written by David, and the second book (Ps. 42–72) chiefly of his, nothing could be more natural than for the compilers to place at the close of each a cluster of Psalms pertaining to that latest scene of his earthly trials—perhaps the last, or nearly the last Psalms he ever wrote. I therefore accept this as the date of Ps. 69 and 71. See particularly the Notes introductory to Ps. 39.

1. Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.

2. I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.

The figures are plain, almost homely, but exceedingly expressive; sinking in deep water of miry bottom, imperiling his very life. Such was his feeling and such apparently the facts of his case when that last conspiracy broke upon him, already almost sinking under the infirmities of age and perhaps sickness.

3. I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.

4. They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored *that* which I took not away.

Worn out with crying; his throat hot, inflamed; his eyes growing dim with tears and long waiting with no answer from his God—was not his case sad in the extreme?——Whatever might be true of David's other enemies, these men, Adonijah, Joab, Abiathar, had no ground for this heartless uprising against a father and an old and most worthy friend. It was terribly cruel upon the heart of the venerable David that they should now conspire to wrest away from him at once his throne and his life. He had done more for them than they could reasonably claim—equivalent to restoring what he never took from them.

5. O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.

As toward God, he had no such claim of being sinless, and afflicted without cause. He remembered but too bitterly the scenes associated with Uriah and Bathsheba, and it did not surprise him that God should remember against him that folly and that guilt.

6. Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake: let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.

7. Because for thy sake I have borne reproach; shame hath covered my face.

But now David is one of those who wait on God for his mercy and in a measure represents this class. Out of this fact he draws an argument; on it he builds his plea that God would in very deed hear and save. O God, have mercy on me, lest, otherwise, those that wait on thee as I now do, become discouraged and even confounded. They will say—If God will not hear David's prayer, how can we hope he will ever hear ours?——This is also a strong point in David's case: "I have suffered, O Lord, for thy sake; I have borne reproach because I have stood by Thee. Now if Thou cast me off, what wilt thou do for thy great name?"

8. I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children.

9. For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.

May we suppose that David here alludes tacitly to the tart

rebuke from his elder brother Eliab on that eventful day when his faith in Israel's God first blazed out before the armies of Israel? (1 Sam. 17: 28); and perhaps also to the rebuff from his own wife Michal, Saul's daughter, when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord with exuberant joy and "despised him in her heart," and taunted him in a most cutting way with her tongue? (2 Sam. 6: 16-23). We may certainly suppose that these cases do not exhaust the list, but are rather specimens of the reproaches that fell on him often for daring to stand out so fully and so fearlessly for God before godless men and women, void of all sympathy with his heart or with Israel's God.——"The zeal of thine house," *i. e.*, zeal *for* thine house—a zealous regard and an intense love for the worship and the honor of thy temple have absorbed my strength and consumed my life-forces. It is supposable that David's mind is in part at least upon his intense and long cherished desire to build a temple for God in Jerusalem; for which indeed he did make immense preparations; but which God did not permit him personally to erect. (See 2 Sam. 7, and 1 Chron. 22, and 28, and 29).—The earnest zeal of Jesus manifested in driving out those that sold and bought in the temple, suggested to the disciples these very apposite words from this Psalm of David, (John 2: 17).

10. When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach.

11. I made sackcloth also my garment; and I became a proverb to them.

12. They that sit in the gate speak against me; and I *was* the song of the drunkards.

There being no Hebrew words answering to "*and chastened*," we may translate the actual words of the text: "And then I wept away my soul [or life] with fasting, and this became a reproach to me." The godless Eliabs and Michals may have reproached David not only for his zeal and faith toward God, but also for his grief and sorrow under trials and under the consciousness of personal guilt.——"They that sit in the gate"—either magistrates or simply the men of leisure, news-mongers; probably the latter. Oriental custom made the gates of the city the place of general resort for gossips of the male sex.

13. But as for me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an acceptable time: O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth of thy salvation.

14. Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink: let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of the deep waters.

15. Let not the water-flood overflow me, neither let the

deep swallow me up, and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

The words (v. 14), "deliver me from them that hate me," seem to show that the calamities indicated by "deep waters," "water-floods," "the deep," "the pit," etc., were precisely those brought upon him by personal, malign enemies, *e. g.*, Adonijah and those whom he drew into his schemes of treason.

16. Hear me, O LORD; for thy loving-kindness *is* good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

17. And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

18. Draw nigh unto my soul, *and* redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.

It is at once noticeable and refreshing that under the pressure of these calamities David seems to think first of all of *prayer*, help from his God in his deep trouble. The first thing to be done is to cry to God; all else is comparatively unimportant. If God be for him, all will be well; without God, all else must utterly fail. His heart as well as his philosophy and his practical wisdom determined the bent of his soul toward God for help.

19. Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonor: mine adversaries *are* all before thee.

20. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none; and for comforters, but I found none.

It was his comfort that God knew his whole case—knew every one of his enemies and all their wickedness toward him.——When he looked around for sympathy and help, he found none. Probably we need not take this statement in its strongest, most absolute sense, for so understood, it is scarcely credible; but rather in the sense—no *adequate* helpers—no comforters who can truly meet the wants of my soul.——The words had their legitimate sense remarkably met in the case of Jesus when all his disciples forsook him and fled (Matt. 26: 56); when the selected three slept more than prayed with their master in the agony of Gethsemane, and the most pronounced friend in the chosen twelve denied him.

21. They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

As said by David of himself, these words are probably figurative. "Gall" *—bitter, and generally thought poisonous. These were most unpalatable as well as unsuitable articles for either food or

drink.——It was customary to give the sufferer under crucifixion certain medicinal drinks to abate the acuteness of his pain. In the case of our Lord, Matthew (27: 34) says: "They gave him vinegar mingled with gall;" while Mark (15: 13) has it: "Wine mingled with myrrh"—a case of different words for the same thing. As done by the Roman soldiers, the purpose was humane, and neither cruel nor insulting; but as parts of the entire process of crucifixion, and as instigated by the murderous Jews, the spirit was the same which appears here—a case therefore of coincidence.

22. Let their table become a snare before them: and *that which should have been* for *their* welfare, *let it become* a trap.

23. Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.

24. Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.

25. Let their habitation be desolate; *and* let none dwell in their tents.

V. 22 seems to be, as to expression and figure, an outgrowth of v. 21. As they have abused and outraged me at my table, so let their table be to them a snare—retribution *in kind.*——The last clause of v. 22 is simply: "And to them, secure, a trap;" *i. e.*, while supposing themselves secure from danger, let their own table ensnare them fatally. The rest of the language here is plain. The moral relations of the passage will be considered below, on vs. 27, 28.

26. For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.

The cruel thing to David was that while he was suffering deserved chastisement for his sins from the hand of God, his enemies took advantage of his distress to taunt, persecute, and destroy him.——"Talk to the grief"—so talk as to aggravate the grief, etc. So Shimei cursed him just at the point when his soul was most bitterly tried with the cruel treason of Absalom. Adonijah took a similar advantage of his father's infirmities of age and sickness.

27. Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness.

28. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

The meaning here is not: Make them more wicked; lead them on to greater and yet greater sin; but this: Inflict punishment for their sin, the same word being used both for sin and for its punishment, in the sense: Give them for their sin the punishment

due to sin; literally, it is: Give punishment *upon* their sin.—— "Let them not come into thy righteousness" is: Let them find no forgiveness; let them not be accepted by thee as righteous.—— "The book of the living" conceives of a record or register which contains the names of the living, but from which the names of the dead are stricken off. Thus Moses (Ex. 32: 32) prays: "Blot me out of thy book which thou hast written." This usage—a natural outgrowth of the earliest use of writing, viz., for geneological purposes, came to be applied to a record or register of the righteous, a book of life, as the list of those who were in favor with God. (Phil. 4: 3, and Rev. 3: 5, and 13: 8, and 20: 12, and 21: 27.)

It remains now to consider the often vexed question of the *imprecatory Psalms. What is their moral character?*

The following few and simple points will bring us to the just solution of this question.——(1) Is it right for God to punish the wicked with just retribution for their sin, in either this world or the next, or in both, according to his wisdom? (2) Can he do this *benevolently*, without the least malign feeling toward the sinner, but purely for the highest good of his universe?——(3) Is it morally right for his people to sympathize with him in his views of the wisdom, the necessity, and therefore the desirableness of such retribution?——(4) Is it possible for his people to do this *benevolently*, with no blending of malign purpose or emotion, for the same reason that God does?——In my view the affirmative in each of these questions *must be true*, and is indeed in ethics self-evident, and therefore too plain to be made more so by any argument.—— The case admits of collateral support, *e. g.*, from evidence in the case of David toward Saul, which shows plainly that while he by no means exempts Saul from his prayers for retribution on the wicked, he yet bore in his heart the kindest and most benevolent feeling toward him.

29. But I *am* poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

30. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

31. *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox *or* bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

"Poor," as most commonly in the case of this Hebrew word, is not pennyless, but frail, weak, and afflicted.——"Set me up on high"—a military phrase, meaning above these dangers—lifted out from the depth of affliction.——The grateful thanks of the heart are more pleasing to God than the heartless offering of ox or bullock, horned and hoofed—these descriptive points making a palpable contrast between the grateful love of the heart and the mere offering of horned cattle.——It is supposable that David alludes here to the facts of the history (1 Kings 1: 19): "Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zoheleth

and called all his brethren," etc. It is not said how much or how little of religious worship may have been meant or professed in this slaughter of animals, but probably he sought to strengthen himself by at least the show of worshiping God. David had no fear that he would make capital for himself by really pleasing God.

32. The humble shall see *this, and* be glad: and your hearts shall live that seek God.

33. For the LORD heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.

"The humble"—a Hebrew word closely akin to the word "poor" in v. 29.——"Your heart shall *live*"—*i. e.*, in real life, joy, and peace, sustained and prolonged, such as no word can express more perfectly than *life*. See Ps. 22: 26, and Heb. 12: 9.

34. Let the heaven and earth praise him, the seas and every thing that moveth therein.

35. For God will save Zion, and will build the cities of Judah: that they may dwell there, and have it in possession.

36. The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: and they that love his name shall dwell therein.

Lifted by faith above all fear, and joyful in the fresh salvation which the Lord had given him over this last combination of enemies to crush him, he calls on the heavens and the earth to praise God and exult with himself in the assurance that God will save Zion and make her prosperity both permanent and glorious. Such a succession of delivering mercies as God had manifested to David through all his life prepared him to die with the unfaltering assurance of God's everlasting love and faithfulness to his Zion, and consequently of the future glory of God's earthly kingdom.

PSALM LXX.

The caption commits the Psalm to the choir-leader; ascribes it to David, and subjoins, "to bring to remembrance," which stands also at the head of Ps. 38. See notes on this phrase there.—— This short Psalm repeats almost verbatim the last portion of Ps. 40; *i. e.*, vs. 13–17. It also stands in very close relations to Ps. 69 which precedes, and Ps. 71, following, a continuation of the former and a preface to the latter. It will be remembered also that Ps. 38–41 which close the first book of Psalms have points of very close analogy with Ps. 69–71 which [with the exception of Ps. 72 from Solomon] close the second book. We have seen strong reasons for assigning them all to the closing years of David's life, the

calamities under which he suffers being those of a feeble and probably diseased old age, coupled with the conspiracy of Adonijah.——This short Psalm is therefore appropriate to its place in the collection. It seems most reasonable to regard it as a distinct composition, and to account for its close resemblance to Ps. 40: 13–17 by the fact that it was composed near the same time and in view of substantially the same external circumstances.

1. *Make haste,* O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.

Here we have Elohim [God] in place of Jehovah as in Ps. 40: 13. The other differences are unimportant. This may have been made simply for variety.

2. Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.

3. Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.

The cruel and heartless treason of Adonijah repeated the sin of Absalom under even more aggravated circumstances because his father was now sick and broken with the weight of years, trials, and sufferings. There was therefore the utmost pertinence in this prayer that those who thus sought his life might be frustrated and broken down in their infamous endeavors. It was a horrible outrage on all propriety that a son, instead of revering a father so worthy of his reverence, should treat him with sovereign contempt. The justice of God and the interests of society demanded swift retribution for such outrageous wrong.

4. Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.

5. But I *am* poor and needy; make haste unto me, O God: thou *art* my help and my deliverer; O LORD, make no tarrying.

Let those who seek thee never have occasion to mourn because they find no help, but seek in vain. Let this be true of all this class, as of me also. I need thy help; need it now: O let this help come without delay!

PSALM LXXI.

The compilers put nothing at the head of this Psalm—a fact which indicates that they held it to be a continuation of the one preceding. Its special points strongly confirm the opinion already expressed in the preliminary remarks on Ps. 69 and 70, viz.: that

it dates near the close of David's life, and was occasioned by the conspiracy of Adonijah. The allusions to his old age are remarkably full and explicit (vs. 5, 6, 9, 17, 18).

1. In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion.

2. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.

"*Have* I put my trust" [preter tense] all my long life; let me never, even to the end of my days, be put to confusion, disappointed in my expectation of help from my God in every emergency.——"Deliver me in thy righteousness," for righteousness demands the fulfillment of thy promises.

3. Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou *art* my rock and my fortress.

4. Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man.

"My strong habitation"—literally, a rock of a dwelling-place—a place of abode strong like a rock. These military ideas come of course from the usages of those times. The fastnesses of the rocks were often places of secure retreat and concealment; the lofty crags were natural castles of strength against the military weapons of that age.——"Deliver me out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man; for surely thy sense of justice and the benevolence of thy heart will demand this. Thou seest the cruel wrongs they perpetrate upon me; let thine indignation be roused against such wickedness.

5. For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD: *thou art* my trust from my youth.

6. By thee have I been holden up from the womb: thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels: my praise *shall be* continually of thee.

Refreshing beyond measure it must have been to David to recall the long years of his experience through a life of sweet trust in God, running even from his youth, back beyond that eventful visit of Samuel (1 Sam. 16: 1–13) which called him in from his flock and put the anointing oil of royalty upon his head. Indeed he recognized God's hand upon him for good even from his birth. All along, his God had been theme of his songs of praise, and should be continually.

7. I am as a wonder unto many; but thou *art* my strong refuge.

"I am as a wonder to many"—of which Dr. Alexander says—"as a prodigy, a wonder, an object of contemptuous astonishment." The

Hebrew word however seems to suggest simply surprise, wonder, and not necessarily contempt. The providences of God toward David had been wonderful, striking; the exigencies through which he passed were extraordinary and might well attract the profound attention of many.——In the end God had always proved to be his refuge—had brought him safely and triumphantly through.

8. Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise *and with* thy honor all the day.

This verse is in form precisely future and not imperative. "My mouth *shall* be filled;" so it should be, and this is the full purpose of my heart.

9. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth.

10. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,

11. Saying, God hath forsaken him; persecute and take him; for *there is* none to deliver *him*.

This was strong pleading, and his faithful God could not fail to hear such prayer. Though conscious of many imperfections, David still had a clear assurance that in the main he had sought to please God and to do his will. This assurance was now a fountain of strength to his soul as he came before God.

12. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.

13. Let them be confounded *and* consumed that are adversaries to my soul; let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonor that seek my hurt.

These verses are in the strain of Ps. 70: 1, 2.

14. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.

15. My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness *and* thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers *thereof*.

I will never cease to hope, and I will even heighten my praises of thee: more and more will I praise thee for thine ever growing mercies.——"I know not the numbers thereof;" I can not express all thou has done that is worthy of praise; there is more than I can tell. The word for "numbers" has the sense of recounting, enumerating. I know not how to count them up.

16. I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only.

"I will go in the strength of the Lord God" should naturally mean—I will pursue my path-way of life in his strength. This sentiment is unobjectionable, but the original word seems not to

be used in this way. This verb "go" * means to *enter into*, or to *go down* as the sun at night, but never to travel one's life-course. It is better therefore to assume a reference to *going into* the sanctuary for worship—this verb being often used for such going. (See Ps. 5 : 7, and 66 : 13). That he speaks of doing this in God's strength is due to his great physical weakness and his sense of inability even to go into the sanctuary save as the Lord should revive and restore his physical vigor.——Upborne of God, so as to reach once more the sanctuary I love, I will speak of thy righteousness and of thine only; not a word of my own; of nothing else but the goodness of my God and his divine equity as between me and my enemies.

17. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.

18. Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not: until I have showed thy strength unto *this* generation, *and* thy power to every one *that* is to come.

"Taught," instructed me not by thy word only or chiefly, but by thy works, preserving me from danger and guiding my steps. His thought seems to be especially upon God's wonderful works of providence toward him throughout his life.——Now that he is old, frail, physically almost powerless, he needs the upholding hand of his God more than ever, and he longs to fill out the same course of testimony for God to the very end of life.——"Forsake me not;" uphold me still until I have testified in behalf of thy sustaining arm to all future generations.

19. Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very high, who hast done great things: O God, who *is* like unto thee!

"Righteousness," here, as often, is goodness with some prominence to the idea of justice as between himself and his enemies. ——"Very high;" literally, *unto the height, i. e.*, of heaven—a common Hebrew phrase to express the highest conceivable greatness. So Ps. 57 : 10: "For thy mercy is great unto the heavens and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds." No other being can compare with God: all the gods of the heathen are nothing before him.

20. *Thou*, which hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

In both instances the word for "again" is the Hebrew verb *return*: Thou wilt *return* and revive; *return* and bring me up. The Psalmist gives prominence to the idea of a special interposition of God—a coming back to manifest his love and power.——"From the depth of the earth" is not here the grave, but the *deep waters*—a figure for extreme depression, weakness; perhaps with allusion

to the waters of the deluge, to which this word is repeatedly applied.

21. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.

"Greatness"—probably in the sense of dignity as king upon thy throne. So far from suffering my glory to be eclipsed and its sun to set in the blood of treason, thou wilt give me fresh proofs of thy favor and of thy power to save.——"Comfort me on every side" is put with equal strength and beauty; Thou wilt pass all round about me and comfort me; look carefully to my whole case with the purpose to do the utmost possible to fill my soul with consolation.

22. I will also praise thee with the psaltery, *even* thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.

23. My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; and my soul, which thou hast redeemed.

24. My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day long: for they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame, that seek my hurt.

It heightens the beauty of this scene that "the sweet Psalmist" is now "old and gray-headed." Yet the fire of love in his soul burns brightly; the spirit of praise and of song is yet in its strength; and these last strains of his pen and tongue are still fresh with the dew of his youth and rich also in the ripeness of hoary age. Who can doubt that such a life, closing in such a death, opens out into a songful and glorious immortality? When will David ever cease to bear his testimony in grateful, adoring praises to the redeeming mercy and enduring faithfulness of his God!

PSALM LXXII.

The two preliminary questions of prime concern are: (*a*) *Who wrote this Psalm?* (*b*) *Of whom does it speak?*

(*a*) As to the author opinions are divided between David and Solomon. I accept the theory that Solomon is the author on the following grounds.——(1) The Psalm is ascribed to him in the caption in the same way in which all the Psalms, supposed to be written by David are ascribed to him, viz., with the Hebrew preposition Lamed * meaning [ascribed] *to* Solomon. In the absence of any strong counter-evidence, this ought certainly to be decisive. ——Since some may at first view suppose that v. 20 is such counter-evidence, it should be said—This verse is not a part of Ps.

72, but is put, independently of this Psalm, at the close of the second book of Psalms. Ps. 72 closes with the double doxology, "Amen and Amen," substantially as each closing Psalm in the several separate books of Psalms ends. See Ps. 41: 13. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Amen and Amen." Here: "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel; Amen and Amen;" and Ps. 89: 52, essentially the same; also Ps. 106: 48. This uniformity in the manner of closing the several books shows plainly that this Ps. 72 closes with v. 19. The compilers added v. 20, not to the 72d Psalm but to the second book of Psalms because they supposed they had now brought in the last of the Psalms of David.——(2) In respect to drapery and costume this Psalm comes from the peaceful reign of Solomon, just as Ps. 2 and 110 come from the warlike reign of David. As the key-note of the latter is war and conquest, so the key-note of this is peace and its normal blessings. As the spirit of prophecy drew the painting in Ps. 2 and 110 from the reign of David and naturally spake to him in figures and images with which his whole life-experience had been familiar, so was the case with this Ps. 72; the Spirit spake to Solomon in terms and figures most in harmony with the grand idea of his reign. Or, to come yet more close to the true conception, assuming that the Messiah is the theme in all these three Psalms, he is put before David's mind as a second David; before Solomon's mind as a second Solomon.——(3) Some of the specific allusions in this Psalm strongly favor if they do not even demand the theory that the date of the writing was during the reign of Solomon, and therefore that he and not David was the author. Of these are v. 10: "The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents" [people unknown to the history of David]; "the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts;" facts which appear precisely in the history of Solomon, but not of David. The wide extent of this king's reign (v. 8) comes in idea from the reign of Solomon and not of David. (4) The Chaldean Paraphrast, very ancient authority as to the current opinon of the Jews on this question, paraphrases the caption "To Solomon," "spoken prophetically *through* Solomon."

(*b.*) The second preliminary question—*Of whom?*—is readily answered. A greater than Solomon is here. Solomon may be said to stand in the foreground, in the sense that the imagery is borrowed from him and from his reign, but the glory of this personage is far above that of Solomon; the extent of his dominion is greater; its duration indefinitely longer; its blessedness to his subjects far more deep, rich, abiding.——The voice of the most remote antiquity assigns this Psalm to the Messiah. The Chaldean Paraphrast expands v. 1 thus: "O God, give the decrees of thy judgments to King Messiah." Jarchi, on v. 16, says: "The ancient doctors explained these words of the times of the Messiah, and indeed the whole Psalm concerning King Messiah." On this

point all the early Christian expositors concur with the early Jewish doctors.

1. Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

2. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment.

It is refreshing to trace the spirit of these verses back to those noblest utterances of David, found among his last words (2 Sam. 23: 2, 3): "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me and his word was in my tongue; the God of Israel said—'*He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.*'" We find the same ideas inwrought as deep convictions in the mind of Solomon; for when God said, "Ask what I shall give thee," he answered, "Give thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad; for who is able to judge this thy so great people?" So the Spirit of inspiration indites this prayer which is really a prophecy: "Give to thy Great King Messiah thy judgments, O God, that he may judge thy people with righteousness and thy poor with judgment"—justice. Isaiah (11: 1–3) takes up this strain of thought: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." "With righteousness shall he judge the poor," etc. And therefore, *because* he does judge and administer, both providentially and morally from God's throne, with infinite justice and perfect equity, his reign shall be supremely prosperous. Such a king the Infinite Father approves, will have, and then will bless with unlimited and eternal prosperity.——That stress is always laid upon the administration of justice to "*the poor*," *i. e.*, the weak, defenseless ones, suggests that government is made for this class; it exists to protect those who have no other protector. It has practically no other mission save to stand for the protection and defense of those who are otherwise exposed to the selfish tyranny of mightier men. God has always accounted it his glory to interpose and withstand the oppressions of the strong upon the weak, and bring his almighty power into play as the perpetual antagonist force against the wrongs which sin in strong hands is sure to inflict where it can. This is the glory of King Messiah's reign.

3. The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness.

"The mountains shall bring," *i. e.*, shall *bring forth* as their natural product—the figure being that the mountains and hills of Palestine, under high cultivation even to their summits and of most exuberant fertility, should bring forth harvests of peace, *i. e.*, all prosperity to the people under this reign of righteousness.

4. He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor.

Always delivering the helpless, friendless ones, he will have no mercy on oppressors, but crush them to atoms—to fine dust as the Hebrew naturally implies. Verily oppression finds no favor before the Great Father. He loves the weakest of his offspring and deems them his special charge. Woe to those, however mighty, who throw themselves athwart his out-gushing sympathies and would fain despoil those whom his heart loves and whom he makes it his glory to protect!

5. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations.

"They," men in general, the masses of the people throughout his wide realm, "shall fear thee," in reverence and submission, long as the sun shines; literally *with* the sun—all along continuously with the shining of his sun upon the face of the earth; also before the face of the moon, long as the moon shall wax and wane. So long shall Messiah reign.——Inasmuch as the entire scope of this Psalm witnesses that this reign of King Messiah here portrayed is his kingdom on this earth in its present state and constitution, and is neither its future era in heaven itself nor any supposed era of peace upon some new earth, reconstructed both materially and spiritually, therefore we are most plainly taught here that Messiah's reign in the triumphs of truth and love upon this very world of ours and under its present constitution *shall be indefinitely long*, stretching on and on through untold, unnumbered ages. Beginning with the most positive, vigorous conflict of light against darkness, love against hate, peace against war, righteousness against all oppression, he shall wrest the scepter of rule from the grasp of Satan, god and prince of this world, and then himself rule on in the triumphs of truth and love over the very world which Satan had cursed so long.

6. He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers *that* water the earth.

7. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.

"The mown grass" is not the part cut off, but the part left standing with its roots in the soil. As rain upon the recently mowed meadows. Every farmer knows how the summer shower comes down with blessings and makes his grass spring up green and gladsome again. So King Messiah comes down to earth to bless his people and refresh the moral face of the world.——"In his days shall the righteous *flourish*," the word coming naturally from the idea of the green, luxuriant meadows under the summer rain. "Peace" in all its broad wealth of oriental meanings is the natural fruit of his coming down. Of this peace there shall be abundance—how long? "Until there shall be *no moon*"—long as the moon shall shine; long as this present world shall stand, with the sun its light by day and the moon its light by night.

8. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

Geographically, what are to be the boundaries of this kingdom? As we ought to expect, the answer is given in terms drawn from ancient Hebrew geography, and specially from the national charter as given through Moses (Ex. 23: 31). "I will set thy bounds from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines (the Mediterranean), and from the desert [of Arabia] unto the river [*i. e.*, the great river Euphrates]. But while this original charter as given to Israel suggests most of the points it does not give them all. These boundaries compared with those have important variations, all in the line of indefinite enlargement. It is not from one specific sea [the Red] to another [the Mediterranean], but from any one sea to any and every other; from the shore on one side to the uttermost shore on the other; and from the great river—this being the usual word for the Euphrates—to the end of the earth, in every direction; *i. e.*, absolute universality. The vast wide earth is his country; the whole world his kingdom. He leaves out no province, no continent, no island, no sea, no ocean, no zone of all the earth from pole to pole.

9. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.

10. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.

11. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.

"They that dwell in the wilderness"—not merely the Nomades in general, but the *wild men*, untutored, uncivilized; the original word being applied to savage beasts (Isa. 13: 21, and 34: 14) as well as to savage men (Ps. 74: 14).——"Shall *bow*"—stronger than the oriental "bow" of civility or even the obeisance due to royalty; and implying complete subjection, as in the parallel phrase—"lick the dust."——"Tarshish"—which some ancient geographers find in Western Italy; more, in Southwestern Spain, and which seems in some cases to be applied to certain coast districts in North Africa—means here the remote regions reached by crossing the Mediterranean. "The isles" also include not merely the Islands of the great sea, but the coasts adjacent to it. ——"Sheba," (Arabia Felix) the richest portion of Arabia; and "Seba," thought to be equivalent to Meroe, representing the rich regions of Ethiopia. In general, these terms indicate the most wealthy regions known to the Hebrew commerce of the age of Solomon.——They "bring *presents*" and "offer *gifts*"—words which suggest the two ideas—tribute as paid by subject nations, and *religious offerings* appropriate in the worship of God. They are the subjects of King Messiah and worship him as their infinite

Lord.——"All kings"—not only those here specified, but all the kings and nations of the whole earth. The *world* is his empire.

12. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.

13. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

14. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

Beautifully the prophecy falls back once more to the moral reasons for conferring such unlimited power upon King Messiah—the same which are implied in vs. 2, 4 above. It is because he fills the divine and most perfect idea of a moral sovereign, administering justice with faultless impartiality, and for evermore befriending the oppressed as against his oppressor. Under his reign each needy one, crying for help, is heard and saved. Their blood is precious in his eyes. No harm done to them or attempted can escape his swift retribution. The strong, it is assumed, can take care of themselves; the weak, defenseless ones are objects of his care; he rules for their protection and salvation. To right the wrongs of this long time sin-cursed earth is his special mission. Be his name praised forever for all this! So the Psalmist proceeds to say.

15. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; *and* daily shall he be praised.

The grammatical forms in this verse strongly favor, if indeed they do not demand the construction which refers "he" ["he shall live"], not to the Messiah, but to his saved people, thought of as a body, a unit. The strong reasons for this construction are that the verbs are transitive rather than passive; he (this saved people) *shall give* to him (the Messiah) the gold of Sheba, and shall *pray* to him continually, and shall daily *praise* him. The sense then will be that this redeemed people shall *live* in the sense of the highest and best prosperity, and shall pour out at his feet the very gold of Sheba, even as Sheba's queen brought her munificent gifts to King Solomon (1 Kings 10: 1–10); and shall lift up their souls in prayer for the success of his kingdom ("thy kingdom come") continually, even people of every tribe and tongue in all lands of the earth; and not their prayers alone but their *praises* shall be perpetual and universal. O what an age will this be of prayer and praise, upborne from the saved ones of his vast kingdom!

16. There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.

The Hebrew word for "handful" is not found elsewhere. Some of its supposed etymological affinities favor the sense—a small quantity; others, a large quantity, an abundance. The oldest Jewish authorities sustain the former sense. So also do the New Testament parables, the "grain of mustard seed," and the "little leaven." The sense would then be that a handful of seed, sown in the most unfavorable localities, on the very top of the mountains, should wave its fruits like the cedars of Lebanon, indicating unexampled fertility.——The populations of the city shall multiply on the same scale of productiveness, as the grass grows.

17. His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and *men* shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

"His name shall be forever;" held in honor and in power through all time.——The second clause [his name shall be *continued*" etc.] seems to imply that it shall have a self-perpetuating power, reproducing itself as human generations do, long as the sun shall shine.——"Men shall be blessed in him" carries the thought back to the early promise made to Abraham [Gen. 12: 3, and 22: 18]; "Through him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." They shall pronounce him most happy and most blest, rejoicing in his prosperity and sympathizing in the blessedness which he enjoys.

18. Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things.

19. And blessed *be* his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory. Amen, and Amen.

To the Lord Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, be all the glory of this kingdom, all the honor for giving to Israel and to the wide world this munificent and perfect Sovereign! He only and he alone performs such wondrous works. Let his glorious name be blessed forever, and the whole earth be vocal with his praises, full of his glory! This rich doxology rounds out to its fit completion this magnificent Psalm, and also fitly closes the second book of Psalms as originally compiled.

20. The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

See remarks in the introduction to this Psalm. I suppose this verse to have been appended by the compilers on their supposition that they had now collected all the extant Psalms of David. Prayer, being their leading characteristic, naturally becomes their name: "the prayers of David."

PSALM LXXIII.

This Psalm and also Psalms 74–83, following, are attributed to Asaph. But the question still remains—Was this the same Asaph who appears so prominently in the service of song in the age of David? or was it some descendant of his, lineal or professional, bearing the same name? The first Asaph was honorably associated with David in the matter of song, including, it would seem, both the authorship of words and music, and the performance also (2 Chron. 29: 30, and Neh. 12: 46, and 1 Chron. 25: 1, 2, 6). But in the age of Jehosaphat we find "a Levite of the sons of Asaph" (2 Chron. 20: 14), and even in the times of Ezra "the children of Asaph" appear as singers (Ezra 2: 41). It is probable therefore that the name Asaph reappeared from time to time among the descendants of that Asaph who labored with David.——Some of these eleven Psalms must upon internal evidence be assigned to a time later than David.——Psalm 73 might have been written at any point from David to Ezra. The writer had seen the wicked prosper apparently more than the righteous, and he was sorely troubled. He sets before us their ungodly pride; their unaccountable prosperity; and his own perplexity and distress over this strange problem, until he went into God's sanctuary and there saw their fearful end portrayed. This relieves his mind of its difficulty, and suggests the far different end of the righteous—amid the glories of which his song closes.

The difficulty which troubled Asaph has troubled other minds in every age. The facts which he saw in the open world before him were by no means peculiar to that age; they may be seen anywhere, in every age. It is, however, only the first or surface view of things which makes the trouble. Asaph at first tacitly assumed not only that retribution from God for the sins of men ought to be finished and made perfect in this present life, laying over nothing to be evened up in the world to come, but also that it ought to be *kept good* and *perfect all along*, step by step, day by day, so that an observer, dropping his eyes upon God's ways toward men at any point would see justice meted out promptly with no delay and with unvarying perfection. But this assumption is without foundation. Such retribution, immediate and perfect, is not God's way. His ways take *time* for their complete unfolding. Manifestly he proposes to *bear long* with the wicked in order to make full proof of the power of forbearance and love upon human hearts to bring them to repentance. And if, as we see here, this system of forbearance and delay of retribution involves some moral trial to the righteous as well as to the wicked, God does not for that reason reject it, but finds use for it in a system wisely constructed for the largest discipline of moral probation. In this line lie the moral lessons of the Psalm before us.——Speaking of this class of Psalms of which Ps. 73 and 37 are samples,

Isaac Taylor remarks ("Spirit of Hebrew Poetry" p. 209): "The tone of these odes is meditative and ethical; they represent those balancing thoughts by aid of which the pious in comparing their own lot, such as often it is, with the lot of the ungodly, or with the outside show of that lot, bring their mind to an even balance and restore its hopeful confidence in the divine favor."

1. Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart.

Remarkably the Psalm opens, affirming as if by anticipation, the conclusion which he reaches at the end. It is as if he would say: Though, as I am about to show you, my mind has labored long and most painfully over this perplexing problem, yet I have come at last most fully to this conclusion: God is surely good to his true Israel. Note, they are not all Israel who are of Israel (Rom. 9: 6). He would have us remember that by "Israel" he means only the pure in heart—"the Israelites indeed in whom is no guile."

2. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.

3. For I was envious at the foolish, *when* I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

"As for me," introduces his own personal experience. I wish to tell you that personally I have had most perplexing trials over this matter. I have been stumbled, and within a little of absolutely falling.——The original suggests feet "stretched out," "poured out," sprawling, as if to make such a fall a serious, not to say almost ludicrous, thing.——For I was envious of the proud, those who make a great show or literally a *shine* in the world, when (I said) I will look into this matter, the prosperity of wicked men. He thought to make this a special study, and he was perplexed.

4. For *there are* no bands in their death: but their strength *is* firm.

"No bands;" more precisely, no pangs; their death is not painful. Their bodies are fat, plump, even to their death—not emaciated, worn with long sickness. The word for "strength" means properly the *body*, the person. This is the first point in his description—a death comparatively painless.

5. They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; neither are they plagued like *other* men.

They are not involved in the troubles common to men; they are not smitten, afflicted, equally with other men of our frail race.

6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them *as* a garment.

"As a chain," not in the sense of a fetter, but rather of a necklace, a personal ornament. The original verb leaves us to choose between *stretching out* the neck, carrying the head with a lofty bearing, and wearing pride as a necklace. The parallel clause favors the latter. They are not only oppressive, but are proud of it, glorying in their guilty shame.

7. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.

The first clause is well put, the original suggesting that their eye *goes forth out of* fatness.——In the last clause the marginal version, "They pass the thoughts of the heart," comes nearer to the true sense. The imaginations of their heart in the sense of their wicked devices, overflow, pour out, from their very abundance. The original words seem to demand this construction.

8. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: they speak loftily.

9. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

Instead of "corrupt," I prefer to translate: "They mock" [speak insultingly], "and speak in wickedness; they speak oppressively as from on high," *i. e.*, as from a commanding position, as men of authority whose words are with power.——V. 9 literally reads: "They set their mouth in the heavens; their tongue ranges [at will] in the earth," *i. e.*, their proud utterances breathe defiance to God above and to men below; they fear nothing in the heavens or in the earth.

10. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.

11. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?

Questions of some difficulty arise here, *e. g.*, *Where* do his people go, and in what sense "return?" Who are they (v. 11) who say, "How doth God know?" and what is the spirit of this question?——Moreover the original gives two readings for the verb "return," the second having the sense of causing to return, in which case the subject of the verb is God—God causes his people to return. But this distinction has only minor importance, for if the agency of God is not expressed in the verb, it is at least implied.——I paraphrase the passage thus: Therefore [under the presence and pressure of these facts concerning the wicked] God's people are brought into this perplexed and questioning attitude of mind, ["hither"], into the state already described; and they drink a cup of bitter waters to the dregs. They even say, How can it be that God knows all this and yet lets these rebels against his throne live and prosper thus? It does not seem possible that God would permit such things if he really knew them!——Another con-

struction of v. 10 is given by some with the sense: Therefore his people apostatize, go over to the party of those wicked men; and find only the bitterest sorrow there. But the first construction above given is the more natural, and yields a sense far more in line with the drift of the Psalm as well as more in accordance with facts.

12. Behold, these *are* the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.

The same speakers continue: Look at this, say they; these are godless men, open enemies of the Most High, yet they prosper *forever*, *i. e.*, all their way through life, and are constantly heaping up riches. The middle clause can scarcely mean, The peaceful men *of this world* are they; but rather, the peaceful ones *of all time*, of perpetuity, this being the almost invariable sense of the well known Hebrew word *Olam.**

13. Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

14. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

While impiety pays so well, yielding such returns, it is of the least possible account to be pious. That I have made my heart pure and washed my hands morally clean is only in vain, *i. e.*, altogether in vain, bringing me no adequate reward. For I have been vexed and scourged all the day long and chastened every morning. I see no such hard lot befalling the wicked.——This is the climax. His heart-troubles and perplexities have reached their maximum. It is terrible.

15. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.

If I said [to myself] I will speak thus (*i. e.*, as above, vs. 11–14), lo, I should deal treacherously against thy children. It would be a breach of good faith—would violate my sacred obligations. Literally, the original seems to say—If at any time—*whenever* I thought in myself, I will speak so, I did break good faith with thy children. It was playing false to my obligations toward them; laying a stumbling-block before them for their destruction.—— Some expositors (less well) give it thus: I should apostatize from their communion.

16. When I thought to know this, it *was* too painful for me:

17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *then* understood I their end.

If yet I searched [dug deep] to know this, it was painful toil to

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my eyes—until I went into the sanctuary of God and there considered, profoundly studied, their latter end.——The Italic word "then" in our English version were better omitted. He was sorely troubled until he went into God's sanctuary and until he studied their latter end there, before God, and in the light of the revelations of God made there. It is implied (not expressed) that he then found relief.——If the question be asked, By what means did the Psalmist obtain at the sanctuary such light respecting the final doom of the wicked? the answer is: From the public reading of the written word of God there and from the rehearsal of inspired songs in the worship of the sanctuary. The Pentateuch, certainly in their hands then, was full of demonstrations of the sudden and fearful end of the wicked—of which it may suffice to name the deluge, Sodom, Egypt, and the rebellious factions of Israel in the desert. The same truths are brought out in many Psalms.

18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction.

19. How are they *brought* into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

The word for "surely" has usually the somewhat stronger sense of *only*. Only in slippery places, never on any solid foundation, thou hast set and evermore wilt set them. Thou hast hurled them down into destruction. Ah, how suddenly, as in the twinkling of an eye, are they in desolation! They are brought to an end; they are finished—used up, *by means of* terrors—as if by the very power of consternation! How suddenly are they made to feel that they can not stand before the dreadful God!

20. As a dream when *one* awaketh; *so*, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

The last word of the verse, "image," seems to mean, the imagination of their dream—the mind's fancies in sleep. The thought then is—as one makes small account of his dreams when once fully waked, so, O Lord, when thou hast waked them from their sleep wilt thou despise their dreaming.——Not "when thou thyself awakest," as if God himself had been asleep, but, as the verb in this grammatical form must mean, when thou hast *caused them* to awake, thou wilt make not the least account of their vain imaginations in mere dreams.

21. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins.

22. So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: I was *as* a beast before thee.

"Was grieved"—literally, was in fermentation like yeast. "Was pricked"—stung with excruciating thought. He is now

profoundly ashamed of himself, and can compare himself only with the irrational brutes. It seems to him passing strange that he should have thought and felt so.——The verbs in v. 21 are future in form—a fact to be accounted for probably by that peculiarity of the Hebrew mind under which they were wont to throw themselves back into the past and give their views of what was then present and future by using the future tense.

23. Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.

24. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me *to* glory.

But strange to say—strange considering how I have thought and felt as to thee—I am constantly with thee; thou hast held me fast by my right hand, against that fatal fall of which I spake as almost befalling me (v. 2). "In thy counsel thou wilt lead me and afterward receive me gloriously," or, perhaps, *into glory*—the former however being the more precise shade of the original. Thou wilt gloriously take me to thyself. What more could he ask?

25. Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides thee.

Literally—What is there for me in the heavens? and compared with thee I have no pleasure upon the earth. Our English version expresses well the ultimate sense of these brief but most precious words. Heaven may be beautiful, but there is no beauty there like that of God; nay more, comparatively speaking, no beauty there save what is in God. Heaven may be social, full of created beings of lofty powers and most genial nature; but what are they all compared with God! This is the spontaneous utterance of all true love to God. The glories of his character throw every thing else into the shade. The blessedness of his favor and friendship surpassses all other joy immeasurably. Nothing else should be once named or thought of in the comparison.

> "Were I in heaven without my God,
> 'T would be no joy to me."

So also, earth with its utmost attractions affords nothing to be loved and enjoyed compared with God.

26. My flesh and my heart faileth: *but* God *is* the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

"My flesh and my heart"—body and soul—languish, lose their vital force, sink under the pressure of weakness and the strain of toil; but God is the rock of my heart and my everlasting portion. O how true to the experience of the child of God! And how full of blessedness is this truth! All enduring life, all abiding joy, are in God alone

27. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.

To be far from God is ruin; for is not he the fountain of all life—as truly of the life of the soul, of its peace and joy, as of the life of the body, sustaining its vital forces and ministering to its joyous vigor.——To go away from God is naturally and always to play the harlot, for is not God a Father, nay, a Husband, holding all his redeemed children in relations to himself most endearing and sacred, even like those between husband and wife? No mistake can be greater than to think of divorcing one's self from God as being no crime. It is of all crimes the greatest!

28. But *it is* good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

But being near to God is good to me; I know it in my own precious experience. It is not only a good but *all good*. Comprehensively it sums up all; leaves out nothing.——I have put my trust in the Lord Jehovah, the God of my covenant, and with the purpose in my heart of publishing all his works. I will speak for God and not be silent. Rebuking myself for my former folly, returning to a better mind and to far other views of the Great God, I discard those vexing thoughts. I am ashamed that I ever indulged them, and much more that I ever uttered them. Henceforth it remains to witness for God that his ways are perfect; his glory infinite; his love the joy of heaven and the joy of earth, beyond which I have nothing else or more to seek.——Thus endeth this wonderful song.

PSALM LXXIV.

This Psalm, designed for public instruction ["Maschil"] is ascribed to Asaph, but doubtless in the same general sense as Ps. 73; *i. e.*, one of the family or school of Asaph, in charge of sacred song, and from time to time preparing new Psalms for public use.——As to its historic relations critics are divided in opinion between the despoiling of the temple by King Ahaz, and the destruction of both city and temple by the Chaldeans. The former was a grave matter and must have been exceedingly afflictive to all pious Jews. (See 2 Kings 16: 14–18, and 2 Chron. 28: 21–25). A very large proportion of the Psalms in this Book III (Ps. 73–89) are located historically between the revolt and the death of Hezekiah. This fact has had great influence to induce certain critics to assign this to the times of Ahaz. But fatal objections to this view appear in numerous points which refuse to be applied to the facts of that age, *e. g.*, perpetual (or perhaps utter) desolations (v. 3); the ensigns of the enemy set up for signs (v. 4); the

burning of the sanctuary (vs. 7, 8); "no more any prophet" (v. 9), etc. These and other points of the description seem to demand the reference of this Psalm to the scenes and the time of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans. Though brief, it compares readily with the lamentations of Jeremiah both in its tone and in the facts to which it alludes.

1. O God, why hast thou cast *us* off forever? *why* doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?

"Cast off," *i. e.*, with loathing, repellency as the verb implies. Why doth thine anger burn and therefore smoke against the flock of thine own feeding, the people whom thou hast nursed and fed and blessed through so many generations? This point in the description puts the case strongly. Will our own God discard us after so many and so long continued demonstrations of his love and care?

2. Remember thy congregation *which* thou hast purchased of old; the rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed; this mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.

"Thy congregation" means a people with whom thou hast often met in holy assembly upon invitation at stated times, and therefore a people that should be dear to thee.——"Hast purchased," *redeemed* them out of Egypt, as if by paying a ransom for their national life.——"The rod of thine inheritance"—rod in the sense of stock, a tribe or family of many generations. As a tree and all its branches are a unit, so a patriarch and all his descendants are one body, this being the figure of "the rod of his inheritance." The fact that God had for long ages dwelt in Mount Zion and practically acknowledged Israel as his own people, is made one ground of this imploring plea, and the Psalmist beseeches God to remember it.

3. Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; *even* all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.

Come down and walk over these fearful, utter desolations, and see all the destruction which the enemy hath wrought in the sanctuary. Who can behold these desolations without pity for the sufferers and indignation against the authors thereof?

4. Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; they set up their ensigns *for* signs.

"Roar" as savage wild beasts exulting over their prey.——"Ensigns for signs," but the Hebrew word in each case is the same. They set up their military and idolatrous banners in place of our banner of the Lord.

5. *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.

6. But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers.

These Chaldean warriors (vandal savages!) sought notoriety and glory in breaking down with axe and hammer all the beautiful carved work of the sanctuary, even as the wood-chopper makes himself known and noted by his dexterity and power in felling the thick trees of the forest. This seems to be the point of this comparison. Ah! how sad to the heart of those who had loved and admired the adornments and surroundings of the holy temple!

7. They have cast fire into thy sanctuary, they have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling-place of thy name to the ground.

8. They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: they have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land.

Literally, they have cast thy sanctuary *into* the fire; to the earth have they profaned the dwelling-place of thy name—as if they would hurl it into the fire and stamp it beneath their proud feet! Their thought was—Let us bury them in one common ruin, the people and their sanctuary together.——"Synagogues of God." The original does not admit the more modern, *i. e.*, the New Testament sense of synagogue, viz., the local houses of worship scattered over all the land. This word * is used very frequently in the Old Testament in the sense of appointed *times* for stated worship; the *place* for such worship, and the assembly itself; here doubtless for the temple as specially *the* place, the one only place (the plural of excellence) for all ritual worship of God in the land. This was the head and front of the Chaldean outrages. They had burned up the only place for the worship of the true God in all the land, or as the word naturally means, the *earth*.

9. We see not our signs: *there is* no more any prophet: neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.

We no longer see our sacred insignia, the ark, the mercy-seat, the Cherubim, the Urim and Thummim, the altar and its appendages; and what aggravates our distress greatly, we have no more any prophet of God who can tell us how long this desolation shall continue. This Psalm was manifestly written while the scenes it portrays were yet fresh, the ruins still smoking (we might almost say), and before Jeremiah had foretold "how long."

10. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy name forever?

11. Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand? pluck *it* out of thy bosom.

"How long?" was the point of most vital interest. Could it be

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that God would let this desolation go on forever?——Withdrawing the right hand from their aid implies standing aloof from their help.——The last clause, translated, "Pluck it out of thy bosom," is in Hebrew highly elliptical, thus: "From thy bosom *consume*," *i. e.*, finish, make an utter end of them. It is implied, (not expressed) that the hand is drawn out of the bosom; the thing expressed is, *consume* them.

12. For God *is* my King of old, working salvation in the midst of the earth.

Here the tone of the Psalm changes, the mind reverting to the glorious past and to the wondrous displays of God's power and faithfulness in behalf of his people. The Psalmist speaks for the whole people. "God is *my* King;" and all the people unite to say, "Often achieving salvation for me in the midst of the earth."

13. Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength: thou breakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.

14. Thou breakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, *and* gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

15. Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: thou driedst up mighty rivers.

Appropriately the song reverts to the glorious works of God at the Red Sea, through the Arabian desert, and at the passage of the Jordan. "By thy power thou didst cleave the sea asunder; thou didst shiver to atoms the heads of the great sea-monsters—said apparently to celebrate God's absolute dominion over the sea and its mighty populations."——"Leviathan;" literally, a crooked serpent, but used like "dragon" for the largest class of sea animals. The poet represents the mighty hand of God at the Red Sea as shattering all the huge sea-monsters, and tossing them up upon the farther shore to become meat for the people dwelling there; but really it would seem with his eye on that proud host—Egypt's horsemen and charioteers, sunk in its mighty waves and their dead carcasses washed upon the desert shore.——"Thou didst cleave fountain and flood," with probable allusion to the cleaving of the rocks under the rod of Moses, out of which waters ran as a river. ——"Thou driedst up mighty rivers," looks to the passage of the Jordan. The word for "mighty" denotes rather a living, perennial stream, never naturally dry. Such was the Jordan, and moreover at the time of this miracle, at high flood, overflowing all its banks.——These wonderful achievements of their Almighty King were good to think of in such seasons of sorrow and despondency as that of the writer of this Psalm and of his people.

16. The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun.

17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter.

Achievements more grand than those at the Red Sea and the Jordan come here before the mind. The God of Israel is none other than the Infinite Creator, the Author of day and night, of light and darkness, who ordained the bounds of land and sea, and the changes of the seasons—summer and winter. This seems to imply that he who made the sun for the joyous light of earth by day could bring up the sunlight of prosperity upon his people and dispel the darkness of their captivity. He who makes summer and winter could change the frost of their winter to the sunshine and order of summer again.

18. Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, and *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.

This one thing let not Jehovah, their covenant God, forget—that the enemy had reproached his name, and were still bringing reproach upon it. Could he bear this? Would it be for his honor before the nations of the earth that his people should be utterly broken down as if their own God were powerless to save?

19. O deliver not the soul of thy turtle-dove unto the multitude *of the wicked:* forget not the congregation of thy poor forever.

The general sense of this verse is obvious, yet the original is difficult, especially on account of the apparent play upon the one word translated in the first clause, "multitude" and in the second "congregation"—applied therefore in the former case to the enemies of God; in the latter, to his friends. The word "soul" probably qualifies this word * which primarily means an animal or a herd of beasts—the sense being: Surrender not thy turtle-dove (gentle, timid, defenseless) to this greedy blood-thirsty herd; forget not the herd—the mass of thy poor ones, forever.

20. Have respect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty.

"Look to the covenant;" fix thine eye, thy thought, upon thy covenant of mercy with thy people; for the darknesses of the earth are full of the dwelling places of cruelty—as if cruelty found its native home there.——The darknesses, or dark places of the earth, are here the Babylon to which God's people were borne away to captivity. No true light of God was there; nought but intensified darkness. Consequently cruelty dwelt there, a people fierce and

savage (See Hab. 1: 6, 7) who could taunt their Jewish captives with the challenge to sing their songs of Zion (Ps. 137).

21. O let not the oppressed return ashamed: let the poor and needy praise thy name.

"Return"—turn back as one baffled, frustrated. "Ashamed," in the usual sense, *put to shame.* Rather, let the poor, *i. e.*, thy poor, helpless people have cause to praise thy name for thy delivering mercy.

22. Arise, O God, plead thine own cause: remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.

23. Forget not the voice of thine enemies: the tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually.

The final plea turns upon the honor of God and his regard for his own name before the nations. Forget not the voice of thine enemies—their exultation over thy conquered people, their shouts of triumph ["tumult"] which *ascend* continually—this being the sense rather than "increaseth." These impious shouts of the exultant Chaldeans rise up continually before God. He can not ignore them; he is entreated to take note thereof and avenge himself upon such enemies. In such emergencies it is never amiss to plead—"What wilt thou do, O our God, for thy great name?" (Jer. 14: 7–9, 21, 22).

PSALM LXXV.

The caption commits this Psalm "to the chief Musician" for use in the sanctuary service; adds the words "Al Taschith" (destroy not) which appear elsewhere only in Ps 57–59 (See Notes on the caption to Ps. 57), and ascribes the Psalm to Asaph.——On the question of date and historic occasion the Psalm has in itself no very distinctive indications. But the historic allusions in Ps. 76 locate that Psalm almost unmistakably in the times of Hezekiah and the famed overthrow of the Assyrian host; and this Psalm (75) is obviously one of a pair with that. The very first verses indicate this. "His name is great in Israel," says Ps. 76; "For thy name is near; thy wondrous works declare it," says Ps. 75. Thanks for some signal manifestation of power and love in behalf of Israel is the tone of Ps. 76, v. 11 calling for the payment of the vows and the bringing of presents to One who had shown himself terrible to their foes; while Ps. 75 strikes the same key-note in its first words: "Unto thee, O Lord, do we give thanks." The judgments of God on some proudly wicked power are the special occasion for both Psalms. I assume it, therefore, as highly probable that these Psalms contemplate the same historic event, viz., that most wonderful interposition of God for his people which distinguished the

reign of Hezekiah and of which Isaiah was both the prophet and the historian. (See his prophecies of it Isa. 10: 5–34, and 14: 24–27, and 17: 12–14, and 33; also his history, chapters 36 and 37.)

1. Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, *unto thee* do we give thanks: for *that* thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.

The clause, "Thy name is near," is a fine illustration of the Hebrew usage of the word "name" to represent the special manifestations of God to men in the line of his power, wisdom, and love, here expressively grouped under the phrase, "Thy wonderful works."——The last part of the verse, more closely translated, might stand: "Thy name is near; thy wondrous works declare it;" or possibly thus: They [men in general] declare thy wondrous works. God is so near, manifests himself so openly and so signally that his glorious works are on every tongue; or those works themselves are both lip and tongue to declare it. Nothing less than this could fitly represent the prevalent feeling of the sons and daughters of Jerusalem when they arose one morning to find one hundred and eighty-five thousand dead corpses where but the night before lay the proud host of Assyria's king—the spoil strown over the country along their retreating path and the survivors of that host gone, never to return! Did they not feel deep in their heart that not their own hand but God's hand had done this? Ah indeed, his name on that eventful night was *near;* his wondrous works told it too plainly to be misunderstood.

2. When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly.

3. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.

The "I" of these verses is not, as the reader might at first view suppose, the writer of the Psalm, nor king Hezekiah, nor indeed any other merely human king. The last clause, "I bear up the pillars of the earth," is altogether too much to come from any mortal lip. The better view therefore is to assume that God himself is the speaker here. In v. 1 his wondrous works are thought of as speaking, *telling* their message [the precise sense of the Hebrew word "declare"]. It is by no violent transition therefore that in these verses God himself speaks.——The English translation fails to give the exact thought. It is better thus: "For I will take a set time; I will judge righteously. The land and all the dwellers in it are panic-smitten; I have adjusted the pillars thereof." That is, I will assign a time for manifesting my royal prerogative of judging the nations; then I will judge them in righteousness. It is an hour of consternation over all my land; men's hearts meditate terror (Isa. 33: 18) and can think and feel nothing else. It is as if the very earth were melting away beneath their feet, but I have the responsibility for its pillars; I shall hold them

to their place, and this great terror will pass away as if it had been but a dream. "Selah;" pause and dwell on a promise so precious, a relief so divine!

4. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:

5. Lift not up your horn on high: speak *not* with a stiff neck.

It seems better here also to attribute the words directly to God as the speaker. If however the Psalmist speaks, he speaks for God and in his behalf. The sentiments are his.——The "horn" is the organ and symbol of power and also of pride. Horned animals when high-spirited and half furious throw high the horn, to which the proud king of Assyria is not unaptly compared. His spirit is fully brought out in the words of Isaiah (10: 7–14, and 36: 4–10, 13–20). These verses are God's admonition to him and to all like him to beware how they insult the God of heaven! "Pride goeth before destruction; a haughty spirit before a fall."

6. For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.

7. But God *is* the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.

The word "promotion" * assumes the original word to be an infinitive verb, meaning to *lift high*, instead of being the plural, *mountains*, as usual. But it is harsh to use such an infinitive as a noun; its location at the very end of the verse is adverse to this construction; besides that it stands in the closest relation with the word wilderness ["south"] immediately before it. I therefore prefer to translate the verse thus, in the most direct, immediate connection with what precedes: "For not from the east, nor from the west, and not from the wilderness of the mountains" [the great Arabian wilderness on the south] "for God himself is judge; he prostrates this and lifts high that." The course of thought is, Throw not your horn proudly in the air as if your power were supreme, and the destinies of all earth's nations were in your hand; for the decision of destinies comes neither from the east nor west, nor from the glorious old mountains of the region of Sinai, but God only and alone is judge—the sole and Almighty Arbiter of human destiny. He hurls down this nation and lifts high that one at his supreme pleasure. With only the word of his power he speaks and it is done!

8. For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red; it is full of mixture; and he poureth out of the same: but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and* drink *them*.

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The way he dealt that day before all Israel with the boastful, blasphemous Assyrian suggests the thought of this verse; a cup of spiced, hot, intoxicating wine, maddening and deadly, which the wicked nation must drink from his hand to its very dregs. They put themselves in battle array against almighty God; of course they fell. Their madness became their death. How could it be otherwise?

9. But I will declare forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.

10. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off; *but* the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

But I for my part—I in the broadest antithesis with their spirit—will set forth the glorious deeds of Jehovah forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob.——In v. 10 it is simply a question of taste whether we shall suppose the speaker (I) to be God himself, or the author of the Psalm, drawn by the strong sympathy of his soul to speak in God's behalf. The truth spoken is the same as in vs. 4–8. The horns of the wicked and proud Assyrian are cut off, and God will do the same thing with every like proud and wicked nation (or individual); but the horn of righteous Israel and of every other righteous nation shall be exalted.

PSALM LXXVI.

The caption consigns this Psalm to the "Chief Musician," to be sung with an instrument called "Neginoth," the author being of the school of Asaph.——The points made in the Psalm adapt themselves so nicely, not to say perfectly, to the destruction of the Assyrian host during the reign of Hezekiah, that we need look no further for its date and historic reference. (See notes introductory to Ps. 75.)

1. In Judah *is* God known: his name *is* great in Israel.

Well might it be said then, "In Judah is God known;" known as the hearer of prayer; known as the enduring, unfailing Friend of his covenant people; known as One mighty to save. "His name is great in Israel;" how could it be otherwise after such displays of matchless power and terrible retribution upon the proud Assyrian!

2. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling-place in Zion.

Salem is but another name for Jersusalem—the city of the Great King, the place of God's special abode, where first his tent and afterward his temple was located. Assyria's king had proudly hurled defiance at the God of Israel; in the words of

Isaiah (10: 33), had "shaken his hand at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem;" but the God who dwelt there sent forth his angel through that Assyrian camp one awful night—it was enough! The dwelling-place of Israel's God was safe!

3. There brake he the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.

There, at that point, just as that marshaled host thought themselves within striking distance and ready to smite the city—there Jehovah shivered the lightnings of the bow, the shield, the sword—all his implements of battle.——Pause and think of that crash underneath the stroke of the Almighty!

4. Thou *art* more glorious *and* excellent than the mountains of prey.

Before the poet proceeds to speak more fully of the effects of that one dreadful blow, he must needs celebrate the superlative glory of Him who dealt it upon his foes. "Thou art brilliant"—shining and "magnificent," far above the sublime mountain peaks so often chosen by robber-mountaineers. So I understand this somewhat difficult passage. Some suppose that mountains are put here for mighty kingdoms, with reference to those hostile, conquering powers at that time in arms against Judah; but this seems to me less poetical and therefore less apt and pertinent than the construction above given.

5. The stout-hearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep: and none of the men of might have found their hands.

Resuming the description of that immense slaughter, he gives three distinct points: (*a*) Those stout-hearted ones—men of mighty heart, fearless and brave—are spoiled. (*b*) They have gone to their last sleep, from which men never wake. (*c*) Men of might they were, but their hands are for evermore powerless. They no longer find aught for their hands to do. In the prosaic history of Isaiah: "In the morning they were all dead corpses."

6. At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob, both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep.

Not men only but chariots and horses are cast by thy rebuke into a dead sleep. The chariots are silent as death, or perhaps the reference may be to the death of the chariot-horses. The dread mission of Death was not to the warriors alone but to the horses as well, of which they had been specially proud (Isaiah 36: 8).

7. Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared: and who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?

"Thou" is made by repetition specially emphatic. *Thou* and none other or else; thou alone art to be feared. Who can stand before thee after thine anger begins to burn?

8. Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still,
9. When God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

From out of his high heavens God made the mandate for his judgments to be heard—judgments in the sense of visitations of destruction upon his defiant foes. Earth feared and hushed itself to silence before God's awful voice.——It was to save the *meek* ones—meek in the two-fold sense of pious and frail—the poor, dependent ones who cast themselves on their God for help.——Pause and contemplate this wonderful interposition!

10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.

Instead of "surely" the Hebrew gives us *for** indicating that the judgment on Assyria was only in accord with the universal principle of God's government here brought to view.——The first clause of this verse is very plain; the second, somewhat difficult—at least it is variously interpreted. The Hebrew verb "restrain" will scarcely admit any other sense than *gird on* as the warrior does his sword. Hence the English version can not well be justified from the Hebrew. We have therefore to choose between these several interpretations.——(1) The last and utmost remains of human wrath thou wilt gird about thee as it were thine own sword for the destruction of thy foes: (2) The remainder of thine own wrath—its extremest manifestations—thou wilt gird on for judgment, etc.: (3) The remains of thy wrath in the sense of those who survive the visitations of thy wrath, thou wilt attach to thyself, converting them from foes to friends.——The last named seems to get more from the words than they can naturally mean. The second in order makes the same word in the second clause refer to the wrath of God which in the first refers to the wrath of man. This is harsh, unnatural, and therefore, being uncalled for, should be rejected. The first-named has decidedly the preference. In this construction the second clause carries out the idea of the first. God can use the wrath of man *to any extent* for his own praise. No matter how fierce, no matter how extreme or desperate, the more the better for his purposes; he can so easily gird it on and make it the very sword of his righteous retribution upon his proud and maddened foes.——Comparing this construction with that of the received English version, it will be seen that this is much the stronger and gives a bolder view of God's over-ruling

agencies. While the English version represents him as curbing in man's wickedness as if he could not make it work out his praise (or at least *whenever* he can not), our construction assumes his infinite power to make any and all of it evolve his praise, since he can even use it as his chief instrument in subduing his foes. Their utmost outbursts of wrath are his sword which he girds on for the battle against sin and wrath.——Sennacherib was a case in point. He was full of pride and wrath against Jehovah. His Assyrian gods (so he said) had given him victory over numerous other great kingdoms of the East; he was bold to try their power against the God of Israel. His pride got up this mighty issue and made it stand out athwart the political sky of the ancient heavens. All the civilized nations of that age had their eyes upon this stupendous trial of strength between the many gods of Assyria and the one God of Israel. And did not the result inure to the praise of Israel's God? Ah, did not Jehovah gird about him the utmost wrath of Assyria's king and use it as his sword for the terrific slaughter of that mighty host?——Such examples fill every page of history. Comprehensively we may ask—What has been going on upon our earth ever since Satan found his way to it with his hellish machinations? Just this: Satan witting, but God outwitting; Satan planning, God over-planning; Satan mad, and the Most High turning all his mad schemes into confusion, shame, and defeat. Every-where and through all time, he who sitteth on high has had in derision the most subtle devices of human or Satanic wrath, counteracting, prostrating, and converting to glorious good what was devised for the utmost evil. All this conspires to the glory and praise of God.——This truth has bearings both wide and rich upon the relations of sin under the moral government of God. It shows plainly that God is not and never can be alarmed by the presence of sin lest it should get any considerable ascendency in his universe. No matter though it rage and burn and goad itself into furious wrath; God knows his own resources. He understands how he can not only arrest and curtail this mischief, but how he can even turn it to great and good account. Hence he stands in no fear for either the present or final safety of his realm.——These views of God's relations to sin should inspire a calm and patient trust in God amid the darkest scenes. The present may be the day of Sin's defiant triumph; but let us know assuredly that this triumph is only apparent; never can be real. Even this appearance of triumph must be transient; it can not last long for God is on his lofty throne and his eyes behold all the sons of pride, to abase them in due time. Therefore let all who love his name "be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

11. Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared.

12. He shall cut off the spirit of princes: *he is* terrible to the kings of the earth.

The daughter of Zion, saved once more, should bring presents to her Great Deliverer, and pay the vows she made in the day of her peril. We may hope that King Hezekiah and his people were not unmindful of their Great Redeemer.——The last verse suggests one of the great lessons of those events—the terrible retribution of the Almighty upon his proud and persistent foes.

PSALM LXXVII.

This Psalm, like Ps. 39 and 62, is committed to "Jeduthun." See introductory notes to Ps. 39.——By general consent critics date this Psalm at some point between the revolt of the ten tribes and the captivity, some of them favoring a point as early as Rehoboam; others, as late as Josiah. I see nothing in the Psalm itself or in its place in the collection, which can determine this question.——The key-note to this Psalm is its antithesis between two lines of thought—two diverse views and states of mind: the first sketched in vs. 2–9; the second in vs. 11–20. The former view rests on some grievous calamity, some events painfully afflictive, which shake the writer's faith in God sorely and drive him almost to despair of further mercy, culminating in those strange questionings which appear in vs. 7–9. Then in v. 10, his faith rallies; repels those terrible temptations to despair; and resolves to take a new and different view of God's wonderful deeds in the ages past. Here he goes back to more remote events; his mind takes a broader range and rests on those great and marvelous achievements which had been the glory of Israel's God, especially the redemption of his captive people from Egypt, and his wonderful manifestations before them in the age of Moses and Aaron.

1. I cried unto God with my voice, *even* unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me.

In this verse the writer gives a comprehensive view of the entire experience expanded in this Psalm. Having given this in the most general way, he proceeds to show how he cried to God—out of what depths of affliction and under what pressure of doubt and despondency; and then how he found relief and finally rose to exulting triumph.

2. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran into the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted.

3. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.

As all God's real children should and indeed are wont to do, in his day of trouble he sought the Lord. He gave himself to prayer. His aching heart turned to God for relief.——Not "my sore," but as the English margin suggests, "my *hand* was stretched forth (in the attitude of prayer) and would not let itself down;" "my soul refused to be comforted." The uplifted, unflagging hand did not become faint or weak (so the verb indicates); his soul took on grief, gave way to sorrow, and found no comfort. His thoughts of God seemed only to aggravate his trouble and overwhelm his soul. *Why* does God let these terrible calamities come upon me and upon Israel?

4. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I can not speak.

"Thou holdest the lids of mine eyes;" *i. e.*, holdest them open so that I can not sleep. "I am so troubled"—literally, so trodden down, so pressed as with insulting foot-treads upon me that I can not speak. A sense of unmitigated calamity and of overwhelming discouragement had broken him utterly down.

5. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.

6. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.

My mind traveled back to better days. I pondered deeply those ancient times and recalled my night-songs when I sang joyously of God's mercies. But this remembrance of better days only served to aggravate his woe.

7. Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favorable no more?

8. Is his mercy clean gone forever? doth *his* promise fail for evermore?

9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.

Is it for all time that the Lord will cast off as with loathing? Will he add no more manifestations of favor? Is his mercy at an end for ever?——These questionings seem to be forced from his lips by the dark aspect of these afflictive providences and by the pressure of despondency under which his soul seemed unable to rise. ——These words paint to the life the bitter experiences which many tempted and tried souls have known but too well. Their being here in this sacred song does not justify them, nor give them any measure of divine sanction. Rather they are here because they are sometimes real, and to show us how the most bewildered souls may come forth from such darkness into day; how the most perplexed and even despairing may find views of God

which shall turn their sorrow into joy; their despair into exulting triumph.

10. And I said, This *is* my infirmity: *but I will remember* the years of the right hand of the Most High.

This verse is the transition point from the sad experience to the joyous—from dark, depressing views to bright, uplifting thoughts of God and his ways. The first clause may be rendered—"And then I said, This makes me sick"—this way of thinking sickens me. Or the principal word may be taken from another root * with the sense, to pierce, bore. This pierces my soul as with daggers; I can not bear it.——The last clause is difficult because the word which our version represents by "years" may be a verb in the sense—to *change*.† The sense might then be; The change from this state is through the right hand of the Most High. He only can achieve it; or it can come to me only by *turning* my thought to what his right hand has done. The ultimate sense, it will be seen, is substantially the same in this construction as in that of our English version which brings forward the verb of the next verse—I will recall the years of God's right hand; *i. e.*, the great achievements of those eventful years. It is by no means easy to decide between these two methods of etymological derivation; nor is it particularly essential to decide, since the ultimate sense varies so slightly.

11. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

12. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings.

In v. 11, the original has a nice shade of thought which our English version fails to give. Though the verb "remember" is repeated, it is in what is called another "conjugation" with a different form and a modified sense, thus: "I will *cause* the works of the Lord to be remembered, *for* I will recall [and so recite] thy wonders of old." The first clause means, I will celebrate—will bring to the notice of men; the second shows how, viz., by first recalling them to his own mind.

13. Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary: who *is so* great a God as *our* God?

The word for "sanctuary"‡ is used either in this sense. the sanctuary; or in the sense of *holiness* as the prime distinctive quality in God's moral character. The latter must be preferred here—(1) Because it gives a better sense; (2) Because this passage manifestly alludes to Ex. 15: 11 where the same word is used: "Who is like unto Thee, glorious in *holiness*, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" This manifest allusion demands that the

* חלל † שנה ‡ קדש

same word here should take the same sense as there. Moreover it would be difficult to find any pertinent sense for the passage in these words—"Thy way is in the temple"—since the context refers to the glorious miracles wrought of God in the redemption of his covenant people. But nothing could be more pertinent than to say: Thy ways are altogether holy, wrought in pure and perfect holiness, i. e., in supreme justice and benevolence—those great moral qualities which in their perfection distinguish the Infinite God from all the noblest creatures of earth. So also in greatness none can compare with him.

14. Thou *art* the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people.

15. Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

Thou art the very God, the only God who performs wonders——"Hast declared:" but according to the usage of the Hebrew, not in word but in deed, literally, thou hast *made known* thy power among the people. The word for "people" is plural, peoples, and therefore must refer to Gentile nations, especially Egypt and the Canaanites.——"With thy arm," as the history has it, "with a high and stretched-out arm," indicating the signal manifestations of thy divine power as in the plagues on Egypt and the overthrow of Pharaoh's host in the sea.——"The sons of Jacob" all the tribes: yet specifying the sons of Joseph because both Ephraim and Manasseh were prominent tribes, especially Ephraim, and pre-eminently so during and after the revolt. This allusion to "the sons of Joseph" would tacitly suggest that those tribes, then in revolt from Judah and from Judah's God, had a common inheritance in those glorious works of God wrought in the ancient days for the united people.——"Selah," let each reader pause and dwell on this significant fact.

16. The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.

Under this grand poetical conception the waters of the Red Sea become instinct with intelligence: they *see* the awful God and are afraid—literally, they *tremble* in agony. Yea, the great deeps are troubled. The hand of God is upon them in power and with effects never known before. How are they startled from their long repose!

17. The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad.

Not only the waters below but the waters above are fearfully agitated. The clouds pour forth torrents: the skies utter a voice; thine arrows [the lightnings] fly to and fro. All the terrific agencies of the thunder-storm are wrought up to their intensest activity. God wields them with his mighty arm!

18. The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven: the lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook.

Not precisely "in the heaven," but in the *whirlwind*. Lightnings made the habited world light with more than the splendors of day. The earth beneath shook under the crash of thunderbolts, leaping from the hand of the Almighty!

19. Thy way *is* in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known.

It was only God marching along the sea and making his pathway in the great waters, when in his pillar of fire and cloud he led the way for the hosts of Israel through the sea. From this conception of God it was but an easy transition of thought to say that his footsteps leave no trace behind. How soon the waters close over those supposed foot-prints of the Almighty! So the majesty and glory of his mighty works, who shall fully comprehend? They are indeed ineffably glorious, and the thought of them lifts us up from our despondency and compels us to feel that if this Great God is our Friend, we can have nothing to fear; if he be the God of Zion, then Zion is forever safe under his wing and strong in his power to save.

20. Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Amid all this terrible enginery of storm and lightning and seas rent asunder—fearful to his enemies—there was nothing to alarm his trustful friends. Ah no; for this God was their Shepherd, leading them quietly as a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. All Israel marched safely and joyously through the vacant bed of the sea, the mountain masses of water looking down as if standing guard over them till they had passed safely through; then did they not take on the fury of their power to whelm the enemies of God and of his people with unutterable ruin!

Now as to the practical application of these inspiring facts, it was but a natural and easy inference that this same God must be still as mighty to save his people as ever—as strong against his enemies in the age of this Psalm, as when he cast Pharaoh and all his host into the depths of the sea as a stone is sunk into the mighty waters. The same Great God who never lacked resources to humble the proudest nations of the ages long ago may be trusted to do all he wills in the ages present or future. That wisdom and power which stand out sublimely prominent in the great deeds of the ancient times will always be equal to any demand through all the ages. His troubled and discouraged people may safely banish their fears and give to this Great God their humble confidence under whatever calamities; through whatever straits. Is any thing too hard for *such a God?*

PSALM LXXVIII.

This Psalm is pre-eminently a "Maschil—a *didactic* composition, composed for the instruction of the people. Ascribed to Asaph, it may have been written by the father of that family or school, contemporary with David, or, like several other Psalms, it may have been composed by some of his successors or descendants bearing his name. This question turns upon the date of the composition.——The general drift and purpose of the Psalm is entirely obvious. It recites the great events of Hebrew history, especially the plagues on Egypt and the wanderings and murmurings in the wilderness, for the high moral purpose of putting in the strong light of contrast the stupendous achievements of their covenant-keeping God in their behalf, coupled with compassionate long-suffering, on the one hand; and the frequent murmurings and apostasies of his people on the other. Examining the line of thought more closely, it becomes apparent that the sacred poet purposely gives prominence to the defection of the tribe of Ephraim (vs. 9–11, 67), and God's choice of Judah as the leading tribe and of David as his servant-king, the founder of the royal family for his chosen people. For practical purposes this prominence would have been forcibly in point at the juncture when David had been placed over the tribe of Judah, but not yet accepted by the other tribes. It would have been appropriate also after the revolt under Jeroboam, especially while the question was still fresh on the heart of the people of both kingdoms, Ephraim and Judah. We find an argument very similar to the one in this Psalm in 2 Chron. 13: 4–12—King Abijah of Judah debating with King Jeroboam of Ephraim. To the great battle which followed, our Psalm (v. 9) may refer.

But the precise date of the Psalm is a question of no small difficulty. Critics hold diverse opinions. Some locate it during the short reign of David over Judah only; others, soon after the scenes narrated 2 Chron. 13, the reign of Abijah, son of Jeroboam; others, during the reign of Hezekiah, supposing it to have been designed to aid in his effort to recall the ten tribes into union with Judah; while others on very slender grounds throw it forward past the captivity. The "turning back" of the armed men of Ephraim in the day of battle (v. 9), alluded to as a signal and well known event, favors the date of Abijah's reign, yet it may possibly refer to events in the administration of Jephthah (Judg. 12: 1–6), or of other Judges (Judg. 1: 27, 29). If the allusion to the "sanctuary" (v. 69) indicated the temple on Moriah decisively, in distinction from the tabernacle on Mt. Zion, then the later date must be accepted; but this word is often applied to the tabernacle. The allusions (v. 60, 61) to Shiloh and the events narrated 1 Sam. 4, favor the earlier date; and finally, the entire absence of allusion to the great events of the reign of David and to God's most wonderful indorsement of his reign by subduing before him all the

ancient enemies of Israel, seem to me to favor strongly the earlier date. The staple events of history in the body of the Psalm belong to the period of Moses and Joshua down to the earlier years of David. If the author had lived in the age of Abijah or of Hezekiah, it is at least highly probable that events later than these would have found place in the Psalm, especially because they would have sustained his main points strongly.——The striking thought with which Ps. 77 closes (v. 20) appears in this Psalm (vs. 52, 53, 70–72)—a fact which may account for placing them in such proximity.

1. Give ear, O my people, *to* my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
2. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:
3. Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.

Appropriately the Psalmist first calls attention to what he is about to say.——"My law"—but in the sense here of moral instruction.——"A parable"—here only a series of illustrations of great moral truths, drawn not from his imagination, but from historic facts. The history of God's dealings with ancient Israel and of their behavior toward God is made to teach great moral lessons.——The Hebrew word for "dark sayings" has often the sense of a riddle, enigma: here it refers to the deeper significance of God's ways toward men which he brings out in this Psalm. (See Ps. 49: 4).——They "are of old" inasmuch as the historic facts transpired long ago, in the days of the fathers and founders of their nation.

4. We will not hide *them* from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.

"We will not hide them from their children;" but in the spirit of the Mosaic law and from the impulses of our own parental heart, will testify of those great works of God wrought for his people. The Psalmist remembered the injunction: "Take heed lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy son's sons," etc. (Deut. 4: 9). "Teach them diligently unto thy children and talk of them when thou sittest in thy house." etc. (Deut. 6: 7).

5. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:
6. That the generation to come might know *them, even*

the children *which* should be born; *who* should arise and declare *them* to their children:

7. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:

8. And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation *that* set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God.

All these points are plain—that God gave their fathers a code of civil law quite complete, and also a system of religious services, to be enjoined carefully upon their children after them, and by them upon their children onward through future ages—all for the high purpose of leading them to set their hope in God and abide in true-hearted obedience.

9. The children of Ephraim, *being* armed, *and* carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.

10. They kept not the covenant of God, and refused to walk in his law;

11. And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had showed them.

As suggested in the introductory remarks on this Psalm, it is not easy to determine what particular "turning back" of the bowmen of Ephraim is here referred to. The tribe was characteristically populous and proud, envious of the supremacy of Judah, and less faithful to their covenant with God. They appear badly in the history of Jephthah (Judg. 12: 1–6), and also in the times of Gideon (Judg. 8: 1–3). They experienced a most signal defeat when under Jeroboam they joined battle with Abijah king of Judah, as recorded 2 Chron. 13. The slaughter of that fearful day was terrible and its moral lessons thrilling. But for the fact that certain other things strongly favor an earlier date, the remarkable prominence of that defeat and slaughter would seem to indicate it as the event referred to here.

12. Marvelous things did he in the sight of their fathers, in the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.

Zoan, called by the Greeks Tanis, was long the capital of Lower Egypt, on one of the eastern arms of the Nile, and near the land of Goshen; probably the residence of the Pharaoh of Moses' time.

13. He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through; and he made the waters to stand as a heap.

Of this most memorable event, the history is given Ex. 14, the commemorative song, Ex. 15: 1–21. In the words of the history, "the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand and on their left" (14: 22); in the loftier strains of poetry, "with the blast of thy nostrils the waters were gathered together; the floods stood

upright as an heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea" (Ex. 15: 8).

14. In the daytime also he led them with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire.

This miraculous manifestation of God's presence seems to have appeared immediately upon their leaving Egypt, "when they came to Ethan in the edge of the wilderness." As described in the history (Ex. 13: 20–22): "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud to lead them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, to go by day and by night." It is spoken of as the presence of God's "angel" (Ex. 14: 40) and continued through all their wilderness journeyings (Ex. 40: 38). After the consecration of the tabernacle, this cloud rested upon it, being lifted up and moving forward as the signal for the march of Israel's host; resting again as the signal for their halting (Num. 9: 15–23, and 10: 33–36). It was God's witness not to Israel only but to other nations of his abiding presence among his people (Num. 14: 13, 14). Nehemiah attributes it to God's "manifold mercies" that under the "great provocations" of his people, God did not forsake them in the wilderness, never allowing the pillar of the cloud to "depart from them by day nor the pillar of fire by night to show them light and the way they should go" (Neh. 9: 18, 19).

15. He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.

16. He brought streams also out of the rock, and caused waters to run down like rivers.

With no exaggeration the poet uses the plural "rocks;" "he clave the rocks in the wilderness," since the history records two signal instances: the first at Rephidim (Ex. 17: 1–6) during the first year of their wanderings; and the second at Kadesh (Num. 20: 1–11) during the last year of the forty. Both the history and the song represent the quantity of water produced as very great, amply sufficient for the supply of three millions of people with all their cattle. Another reference to this miracle (Ps. 105: 41) sustains this view of the great supply: "He opened the rock and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places like a river."——How long this supply in these cases continued is not said; but we may assume it to have been as long as the demand.——Those who are able to appreciate the intense suffering in the desert for want of water, and the utter helplessness of a vast caravan like this—a nation of people moving slowly along through a desert almost utterly destitute of water—may form some conception of the wealth of such a blessing—rivers of gushing water from a smitten rock—enough and more than enough for all! Is it not strange that, after having drank of these waters to their heart's supply, they should not thenceforward and forever have believed in God?

This is precisely the thought which the Psalmist proceeds to suggest.

17. And they sinned yet more against him by provoking the Most High in the wilderness.

18. And they tempted God in their heart by asking meat for their lust.

19. Yea, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

20. Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed; can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people?

"They sinned yet more against him;" they added yet other sin by murmuring about their food. This sin was aggravated by reason of the great mercy shown them in such a gift of water. "They tempted God" in the sense of *trying* him exceedingly by clamoring for food to gratify their appetite. They said, "Our soul loatheth this light bread." "Yea, they spake against God"—in causeless and guilty reflection against his power; for they said, "Is God—even El, the Mighty God—able to spread a table here in this wilderness? We know he smote the rock and brought forth rivers of water; but water is not bread: Is he able to give bread also?" The word "can" in vs. 19, 20 translates the Hebrew verb of power: Has God the *power*—is he *able* to do this thing? Will he provide *flesh* for his people?—for this was what their appetite specially craved.——These verses obviously allude to the scenes of lusting for flesh at Taberah, recorded Num. 14, when God brought up quails from the sea covering their camp for a whole day's journey round about, but visited their sin with his swift judgment—as often happens under the two-fold operation of natural law and of divine and special retribution—to which the next verse refers.

21. Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth: so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel;

22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation:

23. Though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven,

24. And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven.

25. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full.

These questionings of unbelief and complaint against God were the more grievous to him for these two reasons, viz.: (1) That he

had given them water miraculously in ample supply; and (2) that during all the years of their desert life, he had fed them with manna, thus supplying their bread almost without labor on their part. He had given his special commission to the clouds from above and had opened the doors of heaven to rain down upon them this bread of heaven—this food from the home of the angels—for this seems to be what is meant by "angel's food"—literally, the bread of the mighty ones. It is not well to assume that the angels subsist on food like ourselves; much less that they live on precisely such bread as the Hebrew manna. The demands of poetry are better met by assuming that "heaven" here is the lower heaven—the atmosphere above us; and that this heaven is thought of as the home, the realm, of the angels. The bread of the Hebrews, therefore, was not "of the earth, earthy," but from the heaven above, to be associated, therefore, with angelic life—the last thing that men should despise.——The historic account of this manna appears in Ex. 16: and Num. 11: 7–9. It fell after and upon the dew of the evening; was gathered in the morning after the dew had evaporated; in form like coriander seed, to be ground and baked in cakes for bread; its taste as fresh oil or like wafers mixed with honey. Every thing about it was miraculous—a fact doubly evinced by these special points, viz.: that it fell regularly on six mornings and not on the seventh; that the fall of each of the first five days would keep only one day, while the fall of the sixth day was double in amount and would keep two days—thus supplying their Sabbath wants without Sabbath labor; and lastly, that a pot full, laid up as a memorial before the Lord, was kept in perfect preservation for ages. Thus God supplied subsistence for this host of his people during their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. It was to the glory of his name that he thus evinced his infinite resources to feed his people in a barren, desolate wilderness—a most suggestive proof of analogous resources to sustain his people spiritually with the bread of life that comes down from the real heaven. It was the shame and guilt of ancient Israel that even while they were eating this manna and the nation had been subsisting upon it for a long time, they still did not and would not believe that God could furnish *flesh* for so great a people. It was their shame that they should demand it; their damning guilt that with all the light before their minds they would not believe in God's willingness and power to give them in abundance whatever change of food they might really need.

26. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind.

27. He rained flesh also upon them as dust, and feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:

28. And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp, round about their habitations.

29. So they did eat, and were well filled: for he gave them their own desire;

30. They were not estranged from their lust: but while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,

31. The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen *men* of Israel.

This is a full account of the miraculous supply of flesh to which vs. 18–22 allude. The intervening allusion to the manna (vs. 23–25) comes in there to show the special aggravation of their guilt—that with the manna in their hands, they could yet deny God's power to give them flesh in ample supply if he had seen it best to do so.——The history shows that God sent them quails on two distinct occasions; the first in connection with the first manna (Ex. 16: 6, 7, 12, 13); and the second at Taberah (otherwise and afterward called Kibroth-hattaavah) as narrated Num. 11: 4–34. In this latter case the judgment of God fell heavily upon the people while yet the flesh was between their teeth (Num. 11: 33). And yet the survivors seem to have continued to eat of this miraculous supply of flesh, not one day only, nor two days, but a whole month, until it became loathsome (vs. 19, 20). The marvel is that the sudden smiting of the people with a "very great plague" should have had so little moral impression upon the survivors. Was it that this national passion for flesh had become a madness—a furor that made them blind to the tokens of God's displeasure?

32. For all this they sinned still, and believed not for his wondrous works.

33. Therefore their days did he consume in vanity, and their years in trouble.

Their persistent unbelief despite of the presence of perpetual miracles, and the somewhat frequent recurrence of those which were new and fresh, are the strong points made in this Psalm. Similar depravity is a fearful fact in the human life of every age. It stands here a suggestive rebuke to the men of all time that in the very presence of most impressive testimonies of God's love and power they are still so slow of heart to believe in his love and to trust his power to save.——The Hebrew nation doomed to wander forty years up and down, back and forth, in that waste, dreary wilderness consuming their days in vanity and their years in trouble, are God's witnesses to the guilt of such sin, suggesting how the unbelief of professed Christians dooms them to barrenness and desolation during the many years of their earthly pilgrimage; while in their Father's house is bread enough and to spare and their earthly life might just as well be spent in the land of promise, flowing with milk and honey.

34. When he slew them, then they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God.

35. And they remembered that God *was* their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer.

Yet the judgments of God were not altogether in vain. On some hearts they fell impressively and brought forth the desired moral fruit.——"Inquired early" a word which seems to couple the two ideas, early and earnestly. What men rise early in the morning to do, they do with a will, in the true earnestness of the heart.

36. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues.

37. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant.

We need not apply these words to all the people; yet they were but too painfully true of the greater part, especially of the fathers who came out of Egypt under Moses. Their hearts were never true to God's covenant. Impressed by fearful judgments they promised fairly, but full soon went back on their promises and "lied unto God with their tongues."

38. But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and destroyed *them* not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath.

39. For he remembered that they *were* but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.

Those historic events afford a lively illustration of the divine qualities suggested here—deep compassion in view of human guilt; infinite readiness to forgive the penitent; turning away his anger and giving it but little scope compared with the ill-desert which he must notice and rebuke; and finally, making large account of human frailty, remembering that man is but flesh, encompassed with temptations that are mighty and having but feeble power to withstand them. Such have always been God's marvelous ways of mercy toward our sinning race!

40. How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness, *and* grieve him in the desert.

41. Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.

"*How oft*," is the very impression which will be made on the mind of every reader of the history given by Moses of the wilderness life of Israel.——"Turned back," *i. e.*, from God into murmuring and rebellion.——The Hebrew word for "limited," of very rare occurrence, and therefore of somewhat doubtful meaning, is supposed by the best critical authorities to mean *grieved*, or more precisely, they *surprised*, *astonished* him by their perversity; by their strange, unaccountable depravity. Alexander translates:

"They set a mark on the Holy One of Israel," treating him contemptuously. The Lexicons and other critical authorities follow the analogy of cognate languages. The resulting sense—grieved, astonished—is at least appropriate.

42. They remembered not his hand, *nor* the day when he delivered them from the enemy.

43. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, and his wonders in the field of Zoan:

44. And had turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink.

This was another point in their great guilt that they did not remember the mighty hand of God, put forth so signally for their deliverance from Egypt. That "day" of their redemption from Egypt—a day that should have been never forgotten—they practically forgot, and lived, thought, and felt, as if it had never been! ——The Psalmist now proceeds to recite the plagues brought on Egypt by God's mighty hand for the rescue of his chosen people. ——"He turned their rivers;" literally, the streams of their Nile, the one great river of Egypt, which however in Lower Egypt is disparted into many, and reaches the great sea through many mouths. The word here is the usual Egyptian name of the Nile.——It was a terrible judgment—all their waters, blood; their proud river, the boast and glory, the wealth and life of their land—nothing but blood! The parallel Psalm and the history also add—"And slew their fish" (Ps. 105: 29, and Ex. 7: 20, 21).

45. He sent divers sorts of flies among them, which devoured them; and frogs, which destroyed them.

46. He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.

On the question whether there were "diverse sorts of flies" or only one sort, the ancient Jewish doctors held the former view, as expressed in our English version; most of the recent critics hold the latter. The same word * appears both in the history (Ex. 8: 21, 22, etc.) and here. It is now supposed to refer to the gadfly, alias dogfly, so called for his impudence, scorpion-like stinging men and beasts, also sucking their blood.——Moses narrates the plague of frogs Exod. 8: 1–15; of locusts, Ex. 10: 12–19. The "caterpillar" is here only another name for the locust—for which animal the Hebrews had many names [Joel gives four in the same connection]. The word rendered "caterpillar" means the "devourer;" that for locust means, the *countless ones*, the animal that comes in immense numbers.

47. He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with frost.

* ערוב

48. He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts.

The word for "frost" seems to mean *hail-stones.* For the plague of hail, see Ex. 9: 18–33. In a country where even rain is almost unknown, and hail and thunder are of even more rare occurrence, this plague must have been fearfully appalling.

49. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels *among them.*

"Evil angels;" literally, *angels of evil*—messengers who bore calamity as the burden of their message. These material plagues—frogs, flies, locusts, hail and thunderbolts, etc., might by a figure of speech be called God's angels—his ministers of evil sent on Egypt; or the sense may be that God employed the ministry of his angels in sending these plagues. The Bible gives us cases of this sort; *e. g.*, 2 Sam. 24: 16, and Isa. 37: 36. In all these cases, God employed good, not bad angels—"evil" only in the sense that they bore calamities, not blessings.

50. He made a way to his anger; he spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence;

51. And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; the chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:

Last of all came that most fearful plague which spared not one of the first-born of Egypt from the throne to the dunghill, leaving not a house where there was not one dead! Then the might of Jehovah conquered and Egypt's proud and long hardened king succumbed.

52. But made his own people to go forth like sheep, and guided them in the wilderness like a flock.

53. And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: but the sea overwhelmed their enemies.

To a people so familiar with shepherd life, no analogy could be more apt, suggestive, perfect, than this: God leading this nation forth from Egypt and onward through the wilderness as a shepherd does his flock, carefully, lovingly, safely.

54. And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, *even to* this mountain, *which* his right hand had purchased.

He brought them safely through to his own holy land of promise, and especially to this Mount, *i. e.*, Zion, acquired by his own strong arm.

55. He cast out the heathen also before them, and divided them an inheritance by line, and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

The "heathen" are the nations of ancient Canaan.——"Divided to them an inheritance *by line*," alludes to the definite assignment of territory by accurate survey as done by Joshua.——The tribes of Israel were then made to dwell, not in their own tents, but in those of the original Canaanites.

56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies:

57. But turned back, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

58. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

It was the great aggravation of their sin that it was against the *Most High God*.——"Like a deceitful bow" which throws its arrow aside the mark, disappointing the rational expectation of the archer.——"High places"—beautiful, enchanting for situation, where idol-worship could be invested with every sensuous attraction. The cultured but most corrupt nations of Canaan seem to have led the nations of Western Asia in these artful appliances for idolatry.

59. When God heard *this*, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel:

60. So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent *which* he placed among men;

61. And delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy's hand.

The reference to Shiloh serves to connect these verses with the history given in 1 Sam. 4—the scenes of the death of Eli and of his sons; the capture of the ark by the Philistines, which ark seems here to be indicated as "his strength" and "his glory"—consigned to captivity and to the enemies' hands. Those sons of Eli were an outrage on the priesthood, too base to be endured. They brought a curse not on themselves alone, but on the nation.

62. He gave his people over also unto the sword; and was wroth with his inheritance.

63. The fire consumed their young men; and their maidens were not given to marriage.

The history records on this occasion a "very great slaughter"—the fall of "thirty thousand footmen of Israel" (1 Sam. 4: 10).—— In the last clause of v. 63, one reading gives us—"Their maidens were not praised," *i. e.*, no nuptial songs were sung to their praise on their marriage festival; while another reading would mean, Their maidens were not bewailed. The former has the preference

64. Their priests fell by the sword; and their widows made no lamentation.

This seems to allude specially to the fall of Hophni and Phineas, slain in this bloody slaughter. That "their widows made no lamentation" may be due to their being absorbed in their personal peril, or, as some suppose, to the fact that the bodies of the slain were not recovered and therefore no funeral obsequies were held.

65. Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, *and* like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine.

66. And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts: he put them to a perpetual reproach.

This extremity became God's opportunity. Such emergencies demand his interposition for the glory of his own name. He is represented forcibly as a mighty man awaking from sleep, or exhilarated with wine.——From this point the glory of the Philistines began to wane; their prestige gave place to growing failure and disgrace.

67. Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim:

68. But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved.

But these victories over Philistia were not achieved by Ephraim, but rather by Judah and her representative son David. Ephraim lost her pre-eminence among the tribes: Judah arose to this position, and God located the sacred ark on Mt. Zion. This fact brings out one of the purposed political lessons of the Psalm—that God chose Judah, David, and Mt. Zion before Ephraim and Shiloh, a choice therefore which all the tribes were bound to recognize and accept.

69. And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*, like the earth which he hath established forever.

The Italic word supplied—"palaces"—were better read *places*, this being the exact sense of the original. Some critics, induced by the supposed antithesis with "earth" in the last clause, render this *the heavens;* but the word legitimately means only *high places*, mountains. God built his sanctuary stable as the mountains, fixed as the earth which he has founded for the ages. This is in contrast with the ark migratory from place to place as in the period from Shiloh to its location on the hill of Zion.

70. He chose David also his servant, and took him from the sheepfolds:

71. From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.

72. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands.

The general cast of these verses implies that David was then

living and reigning. Especially is this implied by the tense of the last verb which is future—"And *will guide* them by the skill of his hands." This fact bears upon the date of this Psalm.——Thus David from being a skillful shepherd of flocks became the no less skillful pastor-king of God's covenant people. Let all the tribes accept God's choice, and let the great moral lessons of the past history of God's people avail to warn them against forsaking the God of their fathers, and hold them to grateful, unswerving loyalty to their glorious King!

PSALM LXXIX.

This Psalm seems to date with Ps. 74, based on the same historic events, viz., the destruction of Jerusalem and the profanation of its holy temple by the Chaldeans. Some critics locate it in the reign of Manasseh. Too little is known of the shedding of blood in and about the city, and of the damage done to the city in connection with the capture of Manasseh himself, to enable us either to affirm or deny on this point with any considerable certainty. We do know however that such facts as are assumed in this Psalm are fully certified as occurring at the final destruction of the city by the Chaldeans.——As to Manasseh, the writer of his history in the book of Kings (2 Kings 21: 1–18) makes no allusion to his captivity—none to any destruction of the city during his reign. The writer in Chronicles (2 Chron. 33: 11) states that "the Lord brought upon the people the captains of the host of the king of Assyria who took Manasseh among the thorns and bound him with fetters and brought him to Babylon." Nothing is said here of a general slaughter of the people or of the destruction of the city. It is therefore more in harmony with *known* history to assume the reference of this Psalm to the destruction of the city by the Chaldeans.

1. O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance, thy holy temple have they defiled; they have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

"The heathen," the usual word for foreign nations hostile to Israel. "Thine inheritance," the land of Canaan which God had for ages claimed and held as his own. "They have defiled thine holy temple." If the question arise, Why did not the Psalmist use the stronger word "destroyed" if such were really the case? it may be answered that to the pious Israelite destruction was no worse than desecration. Desecration was the first and chief affliction.——"They have laid Jersalem on heaps," the exact sense of the original being: They have put Jerusalem *into* heaps of ruins—have made it such. In Jer. 52: 13, 14, it is said: "They burned the house of the Lord and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men burned

they with fire, and brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about."

2. The dead bodies of thy servants have they given *to be* meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.

3. Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem; and *there was* none to bury *them*.

These are points of the sorest affliction—the shedding of blood like water round about the holy city; human bodies left unburied to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey, and especially that these slain and unburied men were God's servants, his saints. Surely God will hear such plaints of sorrow from his surviving people.——Jeremiah's prophetic forewarnings of this calamity included the lack of burial, which to the ancient oriental mind was of all things most dreadful (Jer. 14: 16, and 16: 4).

4. We are become a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us.

The poets and prophets of Israel, jealous for the honor of God before the world, felt this point most keenly—the reproach brought on God's chosen people, and by implication upon their God, when their heathen enemies were victorious over them. See Lam. 5: 1, and 2: 15, 16, and Ezra 9: 6, 7.

5. How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry forever? shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

Precisely the question which heavy calamity naturally extorts: *how long?* When will it end? The question involves the prayer, O Lord, let it end speedily!

6. Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee, and upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.

7. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling-place.

Rather let thy wrath fall on thine enemies who have never known or worshiped thee, for are they not guilty of cruel wrong? See how they have devoured thy people ["Jacob"] and their homes. Surely thou art the righteous King of nations and will requite such wickedness. Nearly the same words occur Jer. 10: 25.

8. O remember not against us former iniquities: let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us; for we are brought very low.

"Former iniquities," or rather, the iniquities of former generations, for this seems to be more precisely the sense of the

original: "the iniquities of them that were before us." This captivity had been repeatedly attributed to the sins of Manasseh (2 Kings 24: 2–4, and 21: 10–16, and 23: 26, 27). Sinning against the light of a pious father's example, and under the fresh manifestations of God's glorious arm saving his city and people from the Assyrian hosts, no one of all the wicked kings of Judah had so provoked the Lord. His name deserved to be made prominent as having brought on Judah this sweeping ruin. The sufferers pining under their chains in Babylon might fitly pray as here. Spare us any further infliction for sins perpetrated by former generations.——"Prevent," in the sense of anticipate; come in between us and the calamities that still impend.

9. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake.

The only plea that could be made, for it were vain to plead, We have not sinned; vain to urge, This suffering is greater than our deserts. But they could say: We are thy professed people; thy name is implicated in our destiny; have regard therefore to the honor of thy name and save us.——A similar plea all sinners are permitted to use, thus: It is the glory of God to show mercy, to forgive the sins of penitent souls who place themselves within the pale of the pardoning mercy offered in Christ. They may therefore plead with God: "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name." The very epithet, God of our salvation, implies that God has in a sense committed himself to save those who truly seek his mercy.——"Purge away our sins," is in Hebrew "cover," the standard word for making atonement, the sense being: Put out of thy sight, exclude from thine own view; regard us no longer as sinners before thee.

10. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God? let him be known among the heathen in our sight *by* the revenging of the blood of thy servants *which is* shed.

Wherefore should the heathen have occasion to say, Where is their God? They have had a God who has sometimes shown himself mighty to save his people; where is he now? What has happened that He is their Savior no more?——In the last clause the word "by" in italics has no corresponding word in Hebrew. The revenging, or better, avenging, is therefore probably to be taken as the subject of the verb, thus: Let the avenging of the blood of thy servants be known among the heathen in our sight; let us see it, and let the heathen also know it.

11. Let the sighing of the prisoner come up before thee; according to the greatness of thy power preserve thou those that are appointed to die;

12. And render unto our neighbors seven-fold into their

bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.

The "prisoners" contemplate the whole captive people in political bondage. Let their groans come up before thee, O God, as the groans of one man, and then according to the greatness of thine arm (so the Hebrew) preserve alive the sons of death; cause to survive those who are bound over to death, and must die unless thou interpose. Then turn back upon themselves in sevenfold measure the reproach which thy Chaldean enemies have sought to heap upon thee.——"Into their own bosom," or as we might say, turn back upon their own heads or upon themselves. The bosom is named with reference to the oriental usage of making a large reservoir or pocket with the folds of their outer garment or vail as in the case of Ruth (3: 15) which might hang at the bosom. Into this the Psalmist supposes the reproach to be figuratively poured. It is quite noticeable that pouring into the bosom became with the Orientals the proverbial phrase to express recompense, retribution, whether of good or evil. See Isa. 65: 6, 7, and Jer. 32: 18, and Luke 6: 38.——The ignoble fall of Babylon before God's servant Cyrus was a striking answer to this prayer. How did their long famed valor and prowess vanish away in a drunken debauch and in the midst of their impious mockery of Israel's sanctuary and Israel's God!

13. So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks forever: we will show forth thy praise to all generations.

For this crowning mercy, this salvation of thy covenant people from national ruin, how will we, thy covenant people and the sheep of thy pasture, give thee thanks forever! It shall be to thy glory and praise onward through all generations.

PSALM LXXX.

In this Psalm the unusual words, "Upon Shoshannim-Eduth," give us no aid in locating the Psalm in history and nothing decisive as to its object or significance. "Shoshannim" occurs also in the caption of Ps. 45 and 69; "Eduth" in the caption of Ps. 60. The former has usually the sense of lilies; the latter of law, or more strictly testimony. In the present case some critics find under these words the choir of musicians; others, the instruments employed; others still, take them as common, not proper nouns, and think that their usual significance hints at the scope of the Psalm. Conjectures on this point are of small account; nothing can be certainly known.

The subject and aim of this Psalm are in general clear. Israel,

thought of as a vine, transplanted from Egypt to Canaan, and long time prosperous there, has now been sadly damaged; the enclosing protecting hedge around her broken down; the wild beasts tearing her tendrils, plucking her fruit, and trampling it under foot; the fire has done its fearful work of destruction upon her. The Psalm is a prayer to God for help in this emergency—its thrice recurring refrain (vs. 3, 7, 19) giving this key-note: "Turn us again; let thy face shine; so shall we be saved."——If now we ask for the historic point to which this Psalm alludes we have to choose between the overthrow of the Northern kingdom by the Assyrians, on the one hand, and the fall of the Southern kingdom before the Chaldeans, on the other. The former alternative may be so far modified as to include the preceding inroads of Syria upon the Northern kingdom to which sacred history makes several allusions; *e. g.*, 2 Kings 8: 12, and 10: 32, 33, and 12: 17, and 13: 3, 7, 22.——The special allusion (v. 2) to Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, and the probable allusion (v. 17) to Benjamin ("man of the right hand") make it highly probable, almost certain, that the Psalm contemplates the fall of the ten tribes, and is a public prayer, set to music, for God's gracious interposition under this great national and religious calamity. At least we must say such an occasion called for such a prayer. The pious men of Judah ought, under those circumstances, to have prayed and sung according to this Psalm: every word is appropriate to their case. Therefore we may safely assume its reference to that event, written to meet the wants of the worshiping congregations in view of that calamity.

1. Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock; thou that dwellest *between* the cherubim, shine forth.

This address to God as "Shepherd of Israel" was exquisitely pertinent here, suggesting his relations to *all* Israel and intimating that he should not be content to see ten parts in eleven of his fold blotted out, utterly lost. There may perhaps be a tacit allusion also to the fact that his under shepherd was David and that it behooved him to hear the prayer of David's tribe and of those who still adhered to the king of David's line—that he would spare and restore the other tribes.——The name "Joseph" may include the whole nation or only the ten tribes of which Ephraim was foremost. In the former case it is simply parallel to "Israel;" in the latter it carries a special allusion to the ten tribes. The former is the more probable.——"Dwellest between the cherubims;" literally, "the Sitter of Cherubims," *i. e.*, the One enthroned upon the mercy-seat beneath the out-spread wings of the Cherubim.—— The offered prayer is—"shine forth" benignantly; reveal the light of thy presence and the glory of thine arm for our salvation. So in the refrain—"cause thy face to shine."

2. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come *and* save us.

"*Before* Ephraim," etc., *i. e.*, moving in advance of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh as of old when the twelve tribes were marshaled for their onward march or for their encamping rest in the wilderness. It should be noticed that by divine arrangement for locating the tribes in the wilderness, they were formed into a hollow square, three in front of the sacred tent, three on each flank, and three in the rear. (Num. 2: 18–24). The latter were precisely Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, so that pertinently, in motion or at rest, the symbols of God's visible presence were in *front* of these three tribes—*before* Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh stood the emblem of Jehovah's strength and glory. The prayer of this verse therefore reminds Jehovah of his local as well as spiritual relation to these tribes during the forty years of their wilderness life.——"Stir up thy strength"—as if it had been in repose or asleep—a conception not uncommon. Interpose for our salvation in this sad emergency.

3. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

"Turn us again;" cause us to return truly to thee—words which might refer to a political or to a spiritual restoration. The political and the spiritual were so closely associated under that economy that it seems most natural to suppose them both included. That the ten tribes might be politically restored and the whole united nation brought back spiritually to God may be regarded as the burden of this precious refrain.——"Let the face of our God shine upon us" in his blended light and love, with mercies suited to all our case. So shall we be saved.

4. O LORD God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?

The verb, "be angry," means properly, to *smoke*, since the prayers of God's people under the old economy were often thought of as incense ascending before God. Dr. Alexander suggests that the smoke of the Lord's anger and the incense of his people's prayers "are presented in a kind of conflict." See the usage respecting incense in Ps. 141: 2. The symbol comes perhaps from Lev. 16: 13. The prayer here is: How long shall it seem to us that thy displeasure against the sins of our nation shuts off the prayers of thy people in her behalf?

5. Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink in great measure.

Strong words are these—that thou givest thy people their own tears for bread, and tears also for their drinking water and that in large measure. Will not the God of love take these tears away and feed us with far other bread and water than such as this?

6. Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours: and our enemies laugh among themselves.

"A strife unto our neighbors," but probably not in the sense of a bone of contention as betweeen themselves, but rather an object of contempt and scorn to them. They insult us for our weakness and glory over our national calamity. Edom and Ammon missed no opportunity of exulting over the decline or fall of Israel. See Ps. 137: 7, and Amos 1: 11, and Obad. 12.

7. Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Instead of simply "God" as in v. 3, we have in the form of address here, "God of Hosts," significant of his ample power to save.

8. Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen and planted it.

9. Thou preparedst *room* before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.

We have here (v. 8–16) a beautiful parable, or shall we call it an allegory, admirably sustained throughout, in which Israel brought forth from Egypt, is a vine transplanted from that soil to Canaan, and there under divine culture for a long time prosperous, but at this present writing, sadly desolate. Part of the beauty of the parable consists in the apt choice of the Hebrew words—*e. g.*, the verb "hast brought," *i. e.*, a vine, might suggest the transplanting of a vine, or somewhat more readily, the moving of a nomadic caravan across a desert with allusion to Israel on his way to Canaan. "Thou didst *root out* the heathen," pulling them out by the roots to make room for this vine in Canaan. Thus room was made all round about for its luxuriant growth till Israel (under David and Solomon) had finally possessed all the land promised to their fathers.

10. The hills were covered with the shadow of it, and the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.

11. She sent out her boughs unto the sea, and her branches unto the river.

One great vine (this is the conception) covered the hills of Palestine with its shadow; its towering boughs were tall like the cedars of God [Hebrew]; her branches stretched out to the great sea on the West and to the great river (Euphrates) on the East. These were the natural boundaries of the land promised originally to the patriarchs. (See Gen. 15: 18, and Ex. 23: 31, and Num. 34: 6, and Deut. 11: 24.)

12. Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?

13. The boar of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it.

"The hedges," built for her protection against destructive animals. "Why hast *thou* broken down"—by thy providential agencies permitting this result and therefore in a sense conceived to have *done* it. The point of the plea is—Why shouldst *thou* destroy thine own vine after so much labor and love spent upon it and after it had become so magnificently grand? Look down and see how the boar of the wood—the wild boar—doth waste it, etc. The great Assyrian power had ravaged the whole Northern kingdom, besieged and captured Samaria and taken the mass of the people away into captivity. The ten tribes were politically ruined. So large a portion of the original vine had been wasted, devoured.

14. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine;

15. And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

16. *It is* burned with fire, *it is* cut down: they perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.

"Return"—for the thought is that God must have been absent and has not noticed this ruin befalling his vine. This calling the attention of God to his wasted vine—his broken down and desolated people—is full of the simplicity of nature.——In v. 15 "and the vineyard," etc., gives the general sense undoubtedly, yet critics differ much on the question whether the first word * of the verse is a verb in the imperative in the sense—*protect, sustain;* or a noun in the sense—thy *layer-plant, shoot.* We may read, either: Sustain what thy right hand has planted; or continuing the construction with the verb next preceding: Visit this vine, this *layer-plant* which thine own hand has planted. The word occurs but rarely; usage fails to furnish decisive authority. Either construction is admissible.——"And the *branch*"—which, however, in Hebrew is the word for *son:* look upon the *son.* This drops the allegory and returns to the real thing—Israel, the chosen son of God. "Is Ephraim my dear *son* (Jer. 31: 20)?——"Madest strong"—hast reared up to manhood, cultivated and nourished unto maturity and strength.——"Burnt with fire;" "cut down"—resume the allegorical conception of a vine; while the last clause, "they perish," etc., applies naturally to the people.——"At the rebuke of thy countenance," as if the frown of his face was their ruin—only one look of displeasure, and they perished before him.

17. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.

The choice of words here is governed by v. 15. Thy right hand

hath planted a noble vine, *i. e.*, hath begotten and nourished a son. Now let thy hand return and be again upon this man of thy right hand, this son of man whom thou hast matured into manhood and strength for thyself. Whether there is here a tacit allusion to the word Benjamin, which signifies *the son of the right hand*, it may be impossible to decide with certainty.——We have a phrase kindred in thought to this—"my right-hand man"—my chosen helper, my chief reliance. So God trained Israel for his chief spiritual work in this world.

18. So will not we go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.

19. Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

Thy right hand being once more upon us in mercy and in power, we will no more apostatize from thee. Give us life from the dead; put new life, even thine own life, into us, and we will call upon thy name. The closing refrain adds the word Lord, *i. e.*, Jehovah, to the form as in v. 7, heightening the strength and endearment of the sacred name by this addition—our covenant-keeping God, the changeless and ever faithful One.——Recurring to the history we note that in the first year of Hezekiah a very special effort was made to invite all the seriously disposed people of the ten tribes to meet with their brethren of Judah at Jerusalem in the celebration of the Passover. (2 Chron. 30). The messengers of Hezekiah with his royal invitation were by some laughed to scorn; "Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh, and of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem" (v. 11). "A multitude of the people even many of Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun," are referred to again as being present (v. 18). This, be it noted, was in Hezekiah's first year. Three years later the Assyrian King had swept the whole country of the ten tribes with his conquering army and had laid siege to the forlorn hope of their nation in their capital, Samaria. After a siege of three years, *i. e.*, in Hezekiah's sixth year, the city fell and the nation was ruined. Was not this a most startling, thrilling event to the Southern kingdom? It was not only full of suggestions of danger to themselves from the same great conquering power; it was also suggestive of sorrow and sympathy with their afflicted brethren, and not least, of sadness over the great breach made in the once united and flourishing kingdom of Israel. This "vine" which had such a history as our Psalm suggests, this great people of the living God—how are they smitten and wasted! Shall not some notice of this sad event be taken in Judah by the worshiping assembly in Jerusalem? Nothing could be more appropriate. Hence this Psalm, to be sung by the thousands of Judah in solemn remembrance of the desolation brought on so large a portion of their once united, prosperous, and happy kingdom.

PSALM LXXXI.

The words, "To the chief musician upon Gittith," occur also in the caption of Ps. 8, but not elsewhere. See notes there.—— On the points of date and suggestive occasion, I see no objection to locating it very nearly with Ps. 80, perhaps shortly before the final destruction of the Northern kingdom, yet in full view of its near approach. Its appeal may have been designed both for the few open ears yet remaining in that kingdom, and for the people of Judah. It is a summons to the worship of the true God, on the great festivals (v. 1–4) because of his blessings upon the nation in its Egyptian and wilderness life (vs. 5–7); exhorting against all idolatry (vs. 8–10), yet plainly implying that the people had already become obdurately hardened and perverse (vs. 11, 12), to the grief of their divine Father (v. 13) and to their imminent peril; from which however God would soon redeem them if they would penitently seek and honestly serve him (vs. 14–16).

1. Sing aloud unto God our strength: make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.

"Unto God our strength" has special force on the supposition that powerful armies had been threatening or perhaps were even then ravaging the ancient land of Israel. It was faith in Israel's lofty triumph which amid such surroundings summoned the people to sing aloud with joyful songs and shoutings to their God. It amounted to saying: Whom need we fear with the infinite God on our side? What are all the hosts of Hazael or of Shalmanezer, matched against our Lord God Almighty? So may God's people say in every like emergency: What can the utmost powers of hell avail to harm me, if only my own Jesus is near?

2. Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel, the pleasant harp with the psaltery.

3. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

4. For this *was* a statute for Israel, *and* a law of the God of Jacob.

"Take a Psalm," *i. e.*, take up a song; select a Psalm of praise to sing, and then take appropriate instruments to accompany the voice in song.——"Blow up" means only, Give the full blast; let the trumpet ring out its shrill and thrilling tones, calling the people to the service of worship on the new moon. See Num. 23: 24, which "on the seventh month and first day of the month enjoins a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation," etc.——The Hebrew word for "time appointed," * is applied by some to the festival on the new moon; by others to that on the full moon. Moreover, some suppose this verse alludes to the

Passover exclusively; while others with more reason give prominence to the festivals of the seventh month in which occurred the great feast of the new moon; the great day of atonement on the tenth; and the feast of tabernacles, joyful above all, on the fourteenth. We need not exclude any of the Mosaic festivals. The comprehensive thought is, Come and worship Israel's God with cheerful trust and joyous triumph, in all the ways and times of his appointment. Praise him exultingly though in the very face of fierce and mighty national foes, for what are they before our own great God?

5. This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony, when he went out through the land of Egypt: *where* I heard a language *that* I understood not.

6. I removed his shoulder from the burden: his hands were delivered from the pots.

The first clause somewhat favors the reference of what is said above of "our feast day" to the Passover specifically, since that was ordained precisely at the point of their history where they went forth from Egypt (Ex. 12).——The language used here for the Exodus is somewhat peculiar: "in his going forth *upon** or *over* the land of Egypt as if with the march of a conqueror."—— In the clause, "I heard a language I understood not," we must choose between the following constructions: (1) I, the Lord [and my people also] heard the foreign, unknown tongue of the Egyptians; (2) I, the Lord, heard such words of murmuring from my people as were strange, unaccountable; or (3) I, the people, heard the voice of God from Sinai, as never before. Of these the first named is much to be preferred, this being a customary phrase to express a very undesirable condition, in a strange land (Deut 28: 49, and Jer. 5: 15, etc.). The sudden change of person as from "he" to "I" occurs very often in Hebrew. The person speaking throughout the remaining part of the Psalm is the Lord. (See vs. 6, 7, 8, 10, etc).——V. 6 refers to the relief which God gave to the enslaved, hard-tasked people in Egypt. "I removed his shoulder from under the heavy burden; his hands passed out from under the *basket*," in which they bore brick and mortar for building. "This kind of vessel has been found delineated in a burial ground at Thebes." (Alexander).

7. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee; I answered thee in the secret place of thunder: I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.

"Thou calledst in trouble," *i. e.*, as said Ex. 3: 7–10. The people, crushed by their hard bondage, cried to God for help, and he heard their cry.——The Hebrew verbs, I *answered* thee, I *proved* thee, are in the future tense, the precise idea being this:

[I said] I *will* answer thee from the dark thunder-cloud on Sinai; I *will* prove thee at the waters of Meribah. The words express the prospective purpose of God in respect to the moral discipline of the people at the point where he took up their case under their task-masters in Egypt.

8. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;

9. There shall no strange god be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god.

This is an admonition to present duty based on the review of the ancient past.——It is better to make a full pause at the end of v. 8, the sense being, I will testify unto thee, O Israel, if thou wilt hearken to me: and not—"If thou wilt hearken, there shall be no strange god," etc.——How gladly, saith their God, would I testify my love to thee, presenting my appeals and claims, if only thou wilt hearken.——"Strange god"—any god other than their own, a heathen, false god. It was their crying, damning sin that they would accept the gods and the worship of the heathen nations round about—Phenicia and Syria.

10. I *am* the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.

In delivering them from Egypt Jehovah had proved himself to be truly their own God. Let them henceforth believe his promises, obey his word, and in all things accept him as their Infinite God. ——No words can be more plain than these last: "Open thy mouth wide; I will fill it," but their beauty and pertinence are better seen if we suppose the writer thinks of the little nestlings, late from the egg—eyes still closed, but ears quick to notice any one's approach and sure to open wide their mouth for the food their instincts look for from the mother bird. Sweet confiding creatures, they have but one thought—that their good mother will surely give them what they need. So let God's children do, for they are almost as powerless to distinguish good from evil as the eyeless nestlings, and have quite as much reason as they to accept all that God drops into their open mouths as being the best things possible in their case. Moreover let them enlarge their heart and make broad their requests, remembering that when God's children ask favors of him, they are never straitened in God, but only in themselves.

11. But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.

"Would none of me" is scarcely modern English. The Hebrew means: Would not obey me; were *not willing* as toward me. They were simply perverse, rebellious.——Historically, this had a fearfully wide application. It was true of the masses that came out of

Egypt; it became painfully apparent during the time of the Judges and in the age after the revolt under Jeroboam.

12. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: *and* they walked in their own counsels.

"So," in the sense of *consequently, i. e., because of* their perverseness, I sent them forth from me; I thrust them away for the perverseness of their heart. The centuries of long forbearance came to an end at last, and God gave up first the Northern kingdom and then at last the Southern also to captivity and desolation. They would not have Jehovah for their God, but would have Baal and Moloch; so God gave them up to their own perverseness, and consequently, to national ruin. This is the law of his moral kingdom with individual sinners no less than with nations. There is a point beyond which forbearance can go no farther, and where forbearance ends, judgment without mercy begins.

13. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, *and* Israel had walked in my ways!

14. I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries.

But such a doom brings bitter grief to the parental heart of the Great Father. Most tenderly, most honestly and truly, he cries out: O that my people had hearkened to me! How soon should I have subdued their enemies and turned back my strong hand from afflicting them!——So God will say with equal truth over the doom of every lost sinner: O that he had heard my call to repent! O that he had heeded my invitations of mercy and free pardon! O that there had been the heart in him to obey my voice!

15. The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves unto him: but their time should have endured forever.

16. He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat; and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

"Submitted themselves"—so impressed with fear as even to make false professions of allegiance—the verb used being common in Hebrew to express the thought of submission through extreme fear. The case of the Gibeonites and Joshua was perhaps the occasion of the phrase.——"Their time"—the time of my people's prosperity would in this case have been unlimited. Age after age they might have lived in the sunlight of Jehovah's presence and love. All earthly good should have filled their cup—the best of wheat; fullness of honey. Who can measure the blessings which God pours out upon the truly obedient? To nations or to individuals, with no exception, these promises are forever good.

PSALM LXXII.

This Psalm rebukes corrupt judges, putting in strong light their high responsibility as vicegerents of God and therefore held accountable before him for the faithful administration of justice. True to the nature of the case, this Psalm assumes that laws and tribunals exist for the benefit of those who need them for the protection of their rights, *i. e.*, for the poor, the helpless, the friendless. Let all judges, and indeed legislators also, know and forget it not, that God's sympathies are with these dependent classes, and he will surely hold civil officers to their responsibilities toward these needy ones. If they take the place of God, either in making or in administering civil law, let them take care that they use their high powers in sympathy with their Supreme Master and never in defiance of his throne.

As to the date and occasion of this Psalm, nothing can be certainly known. No doubt it was written with a definite aim, addressing certain corrupt judges then in office and then abusing their powers. "How long will *ye* judge unjustly?"——The place of this Psalm in the collection slightly favors its reference to the same age with the two preceding Psalms, *i. e.*, in the latter days of the Northern kingdom. Such apostasy from God as theirs, naturally carried with it corruption of the courts of justice and crying oppression of the poor—to all which, history lends its ample confirmation. Amos, living among that people at that time, witnesseth thus: "They oppress the poor and crush the needy; turn judgment to wormwood and leave off righteousness in the earth; hate him that rebuketh in the gate" [the court-room]; "turn aside the poor in the gate from his right" etc. To such perversions of justice, the rebukes of this Psalm most pertinently apply.

1. God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods.

In the use of the word "gods" (vs. 1, 6) the English reader is liable to be misled by the defective translation of these passages compared with certain passages in the Mosaic law which speak of human judges under the same name. The facts are that in Ex. 21: 6, and 22: 8, 9, 28, this same word ("Elohim") is used of civil judges and is translated "judges." But the same word is used here and beyond all question in the same sense. It should therefore have been translated "judges" here as well as there; or gods there as well as here. A uniform translation where the sense is so obviously the same would have relieved the difficulty. ——If the question be asked, How it came to pass that the word "Elohim" was given to mere men in the capacity of judges? the answer is: (1) They were acting in the place of God, in behalf of God—were quasi-gods in the administration of justice in God's be-

half. Here we may note how strongly this idea was put and pressed under the ancient economy. "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, *for the judgment is God's*" (Deut. 1: 17). Jehoshaphat said to judges appointed by him: "Take heed what ye do, for ye judge, not for man but for the Lord who is with you in the judgment" (2 Chron. 19: 6).—— (2) This name for God admits of a wider range of application than any one of his other names, it being applied to angels (Ps. 8: 6) as well as here to judges. In the singular number (El), it is used of the gods of the heathen (Isa. 44: 10, 15, and 45: 20, and 46: 6).——"Standeth in the congregation"—here said of the assemblies convened for judicial purposes equivalent to the civil court. God takes his stand evermore in the midst of those who gather for the administration of law, always present in the court-room.—— "Congregation of the mighty;" not the assemblies of great men or strong men; not implying that God is among them because they are mighty men; but the word being "El" [God] we must apply it to him unless there are very strong reasons for some other sense of the word. The meaning of the clause therefore I take to be: God standeth in the judicial assemblies which himself—the Most Mighty One, has established. Why should he not be there to supervise all its proceedings; to hold every judge to his high responsibilities?

2. How long will ye judge unjustly, and accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.

To "accept the *person* of the wicked" is commonly supposed to mean: to have regard to other things—points of a *personal* nature—rather than to the intrinsic right of the case. Some critics however give it this turn: To take into favor wicked men—men whose crimes you ought to condemn, and who ought to be themselves condemned because of their crimes. The general sense throughout the Bible seems to be, to make discriminations on the ground, not of intrinsic character and merit, but of extraneous and personal considerations; *e. g.*, the prestige of riches, the offer of bribes, etc.

3. Defend the poor and fatherless: do justice to the afflicted and needy.

4. Deliver the poor and needy: rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked.

Remarkably this passage is made strong by a grouping of all that class of words known to the language—the weak, the unprotected, the fatherless, the pennyless, etc.

5. They know not, neither will they understand; they walk on in darkness: all the foundations of the earth are out of course.

The judges who rule iniquitously seem to have no sense, not even common understanding. Mark how strangely they ignore the God above and their own high responsibilities to his bar!——Such administration of law subverts the very foundations of all society, even as if in the material world, the very foundations were all afloat, sliding out from beneath our feet! This is the thought indicated in the Hebrew verb.

6. I have said, Ye *are* Gods; and all of you *are* children of the Most High.

7. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.

Though I have called you "gods" and children of the Most High, yet be not elated; do not dream of being immortal for this earth, or of being above responsibility to the Most High; for ye shall surely die like frail man, made of the ground.* And that death will bring you before the dreadful bar of Him whose law you have trampled down; whose heart of love for the poor you have outraged; whose hottest retribution you have brought down on your own guilty heads!

8. Arise, O God, judge the earth: for thou shalt inherit all nations.

"Arise," for the case is urgent; the perversions of justice are awful; arise, therefore, and judge all the earth—not the land of Canaan only, but all the nations of the wide earth; "for thou shalt inherit all the nations" even as thou hast long since called Israel thine "inheritance." This assumes the broad doctrine that Israel's God is Supreme Judge of all the nations of men, Gentiles no less than Jews. Consider Ps. 2: 8.——The moral lessons of this Psalm for all who have to do with the administration of civil law are too obvious to need remark. Who does not see that if there be a Supreme Being, the doctrine of this Psalm must be true, and being true, is infinitely beneficent in its influence and sublime in its moral grandeur?

PSALM LXXXIII.

This Psalm supposes a general combination of adjacent powers against Israel: Edom, Moab, Ammon, Philistia, Tyre, and Syria, with the full purpose of blotting out the very name of Israel forever. In such an emergency what should the people of the Lord do but what is indicated here—cry aloud to their own Almighty God for help? Such is the strain of this Psalm, a song composed to be sung for this occasion, to embody the prayers of the whole

* אדם

people.——As to the precise historic occasion, the evidence preponderates strongly in favor of the great combination of foreign powers against Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat, of which we have an account in 2 Chron. 20, and to which date Ps. 47 and 48 also belong. The account in Chronicles should be read in connection with this Psalm. The scene was intensely thrilling—the invasion so formidable, its animus so malign, its prospects of success so fair, and the consequent ruin of the Jewish city and nation so apparently near and certain; but in the end the Almighty arm was interposed; the salvation of Israel was glorious, and the ruin of their enemies most disgraceful and overwhelming. It was prayer answered before all earth and heaven, and the arm of Almighty God made bare to the confounding of his enemies and the exulting joy of his friends.——The writer in Smith's Bible Dictionary ["Psalms"] holds that this Psalm refers to a supposed combination of foreign enemies against both Judah and Israel in the times of Jeroboam second of Israel and Uzziah of Judah—an hypothesis which lacks historic support and goes against all probability in supposing that Jeroboam second came into such relations to the God of Israel, and if he did, that his history should ignore it.

1. Keep not thou silence, O God: hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.

Surely it was no time for their God to be silent and at rest when such dangers threatened his people.

2. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult: and they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

3. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones.

"*Thine* enemies," not merely ours. They are mustering their forces against thee, O God.——"Make a tumult," the Hebrew word implying a confused rumble and roar as of distant armies, mustering for battle.——"Against thy hidden ones," those who are under thy special protection, shielded beneath thine outspread wing.

4. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

To exterminate the Israel they hated and put an end forever to the annoyance they felt from her presence among them; to wipe out the old score of many a grudge and bury her very name so deep that it should never rise again—such was the fell purpose of their heart. The prayer of God's people brings up these points as conclusive reasons why God should arise in his might to blast their schemes.

5. For they have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee:

6. The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; of Moab, and the Hagarenes;

7. Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; the Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;

8. Assur also is joined with them: they have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

"The tabernacles [or tents] of Edom," for the people dwelling therein—a tent-abiding race. The Ishmaelites, their neighbors of the Arabian desert. The Hagarenes appear in history (1 Chron. 5: 10) as dwellers in eastern Arabia, contiguous to the tribe of Reuben on the east of Jordan. "Gebal," properly a mountain; here for the mountainous district south of the Dead Sea, and embraced in the territory of Edom. The Philistines on the south-west and Tyre on the north-west with Syria on the north, completed the circle, engirding the little kingdom of Judah on every side.——"They have helped the children of Lot," *i. e.*, Moab and Ammon who seem to have been the prime instigators of this conspiracy against Judah.——"Selah;" pause to think of these powerful foes and of the threatened ruin impending over God's covenant people.

9. Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites; as *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:

10. *Which* perished at En-dor: they became *as* dung for the earth.

Here is the prayer. The historic allusions to previous victories over these or similar enemies had in themselves an inspiration of hope. Why shouldest not thou, O God, re-enact those ancient deliverances of thy people and again overwhelm thy foes in judgment?——As unto the Midianites by the hand of Gideon (Judg. 7); as to Sisera and Jabin (Judg. 4 and 5).

11. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb: yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:

12. Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession.

"Oreb and Zeeb," "Zebah and Zalmunna," suggest Gideon's victory over the Midianites, as given Judg. 7 and 8—one of the most striking manifestations of Jehovah's power against the enemies of Israel. Those ancient Midianites, like these of the age of our Psalm, meant no less than to drive us from our homes and take possession for themselves.——"Houses of God," but the Hebrew* has the broader sense of dwelling-places, including not only the tent or house proper, but the adjacent grounds.

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13. O my God, make them like a wheel; as the stubble before the wind.

"Like a wheel," properly, a rolling thing, with reference here to flying chaff driven by the high winds, of which that people availed themselves on the hill-tops for winnowing grain. Isaiah makes use beautifully of the same word in a similar connection (Isa. 17: 13): "like a *rolling thing* before the whirlwind."

14. As the fire burneth a wood, and as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;

15. So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm.

The fires in a dry forest or sweeping up the mountain sides are vivid images of the destruction here invoked upon these combined enemies of God's people. So do thou chase them down with thy tempest; strike terror through them with thy storm!

16. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD.

17. Let them be confounded and troubled forever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:

18. That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone *is* JEHOVAH, *art* the Most High over all the earth.

As shame reveals itself in the blush on the face, no expression can be stronger than this: "*Fill* their faces with shame." And let it be forever; through all time; let them never recover from this disgraceful defeat, this crushing overthrow. The animus of this prayer is that men—other men—all the world outside of these combined nations, and perhaps all the survivors of these—may seek thy name, O Lord, and may know of a truth that thou art the Most High God over all the earth. Special beauty and force appear in the closing strain: Thou who alone bearest the name *Jehovah*—the ever-living, unchanging, ever-faithful God of thy covenant people. Who is like unto thee? Let all the nations of the earth know how worthy thou art to be trusted, loved, adored, by all thy people.

PSALM LXXXIV.

For the words, "upon Gittith," see Notes introductory to Ps. 8.——The Psalms ascribed to Asaph and his family closed with Ps. 83; this is ascribed to another family in the same profession—that of Korah.——On the question of date and special occasion, opinions are divided between the times of David driven into exile by Absalom's rebellion, and the times of Hezekiah—in the latter case expressing the spirit of the king and his pious friends when they reinstated the national festivals and warmly invited their

brethren of the Northern kingdom to come up to the holy city and temple on the great Passover. (See 2 Chron. 29: 3). In favor of the former it is urged that this Psalm affiliates with Ps. 42. But in fact it has more points unlike Ps. 42 than like it. It is with that Psalm in its common love and longing for the sanctuary, but it does not like that, assume the writer's absence and exile far away across the Jordan, and it breathes none of his intense despondency, but is rather hopeful and strong in the spirit of a vigorous faith in God. The whole tone of this Psalm is that of *inviting* men to the tabernacle of the Lord. It contemplates their journeying thither, but sees no toils, no discomforts, but only sweet associations and fountains of delight in the very travels up from distant cities to the place of appearing before God in Zion. These points accord well with the spirit and circumstances of Hezekiah's great reformation. Coupling them with the *place* which the compilers have assigned to this Psalm, viz., in the third book, along with those which fall between the revolt and the captivity, the evidence seems to me to preponderate very strongly in favor of the times of Hezekiah.

1. How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts!
2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.

"How amiable"—words which legitimately mean: how worthy of being loved, how lovable in general; but the Hebrew is more definite and personal: How *dear to my heart*—O how tenderly do I love the place where Thou dwellest, O Lord of Hosts! It is rather an utterance of the heart than a judgment of the intelligence, expressing what one feels for himself rather than what he holds as a general, abstract truth.——"Longing," "fainting," are strong expressions of intense, languishing desire—a feeling that nothing else can at all satisfy.——The Hebrew verb for crieth out * is used almost if not quite invariably for the shoutings of exultant joy; not for the imploring cry for help. The distinction is important as bearing upon the tone of feeling that pervades the Psalm.

3. Yea, the sparrow hath found a house, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, *even* thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.

In its obvious sense this speaks of literal birds as finding place for their nests *near* the altars of the Lord (*near* is probably the meaning of the Hebrew word here). Some critics, thinking this highly improbable, would escape the difficulty by assuming that the Psalmist compares himself to those little birds—"Yea, even I, a wandering bird, have at last found a resting place for myself

and my dear ones in thine house," etc. But this seems to be an unnatural sense for these words. On the other hand those little birds, certainly in this country and doubtless in Palestine of old, are wont to make their nests in the quiet dwelling places of men, and especially in those which are temporarily unoccupied or deserted. It should be borne in mind that Ahaz, immediately preceding Hezekiah, had "cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God and shut up the doors of the house of the Lord" (2 Chron. 28: 24). Consequently Hezekiah "in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the Lord and repaired them" (2 Chron. 29: 3). Public worship there had been for some time entirely discontinued: they "had shut up the doors of the porch, put out the lamps, and had not burned incense nor offered burnt-offering in the holy place unto the God of Israel" (v. 7). For a period therefore during the reign of that most wicked Ahaz, the sparrow and the swallow and they only had found sweet homes for themselves and their young around the altars of the Lord of Hosts. Yet there was the appropriate home for those who could say of this glorious Lord of Hosts—"*my* King is he and *my* God."

4. Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. Selah.

Happy are the little birds and birdlings who nestle there; more blessed still are those whom God has made in his own image and who intelligently give their hearts' best love and homage to their Maker. The reason is given; viz., they will perpetually praise thee; round and round; over and over again, evermore will they pour forth their praises from full glad hearts to the glorious One, their Maker and Father. The Hebrew word rendered "still" ["still praising"] gives precisely this sense: they will reiterate their praises in perpetual succession.——"Selah;" pause and consider their joy!——"Dwell in thy house" indicates that they are often there and so to speak, *at home* there in the love of their heart and in the quiet trust of their souls in the Great God who makes it his abode.

5. Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee; in whose heart *are* the ways *of them.*

"Whose strength is in thee"—not in himself but in his God alone; who looks to thee for help at all times, not only in great but in all lesser and all least emergencies. The Gospel writers speak of the same living trust: "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4: 13). "I am the vine; ye are the branches; abide in me as the branch in the vine: so shall ye be living branches and not dead, and bear much fruit to the glory of God (John 15: 4–7). Such are indeed truly blessed.——The last verse is concise and difficult. All that appears in the original reads thus: "Ways—in their heart." The Italic words "*of them*"

are without authority and, in this connection, without meaning. The word for "ways" signifies a high-way, rolled up, cast up; is used by Isaiah and translated "high-way" in 11: 16, and 33: 8, and 40: 3, and 49: 11, and 62: 10. It may refer therefore to the usual routes of travel from remote parts of Palestine up to Jerusalem, or possibly, as some suppose, to the procession of people on their march to attend the holy festivals. The passage would then mean that such worshipers *love these high-ways.* Hallowed associations cluster round them.——Other critics give the passage the sense of ways prepared in their heart for the incoming and abode of the Lord himself, carrying out the figure of Isaiah (40: 3) to its spiritual thought—"Prepare ye the way of the Lord." But the next verse keeps the actual journey still before the mind, at least ideally: "Passing through the valley of Baca;" and therefore the drift of thought seems to demand a reference in these brief words to the high-ways toward Jerusalem in their material sense.

6. *Who* passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools.

Each of the two clauses of this verse is controverted and must perhaps be left a little doubtful.——"The valley of Baca" Fuerst translates, "Valley of the balsam shrub," which he locates not far from Jerusalem, one which many of the pilgrims had to pass on their way to the holy festivals. Gesenius gives the more common view—"The vale of weeping; valley of lamentation," taking it as a proper name of "a valley in Palestine, probably gloomy and sterile." Others assume it to be only ideal, like "the valley of the shadow of death," signifying that travelers burdened with sorrows who wet their way with tears, yet coming up to the temple of the living God find all joys abounding there. They turn a vale of tears to a valley of well-springs and verdure. I am constrained to think there is a play upon the significance of the word "Baca," weeping, in the manner last above stated; but whether a valley of that name was known to the geography of Palestine in the age of the writer must remain in doubt.——On the last clause critics differ widely.——The word for "pools" with the vowels of our Hebrew text must mean *blessings.* This being conceded, the test-word is the one translated rain* which in nearly or quite every other case of its use means *teacher*, and not *rain.* Hence Alexander with most of the older authorities gives the passage this sense: "The teacher is clothed with blessings." Gesenius puts it, "The rain" [*i. e.*, the early rain] "gives abundant blessings." But Fuerst starts a new interpretation, making it the proper name of some dry and barren valley through which as well as through the valley of Baca the pilgrims had to pass on their way to Jerusalem. This valley was clothed with blessings to them.——The strong point in support of the sense "teacher," is the well es-

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tablished usage of the word. This is so general that it could scarcely fail to suggest the thought. Under this construction, the Psalmist in a measure drops the material figure and gives us the spiritual idea, viz., that truth—the things taught and learned of God—constitute the real joy and the priceless blessings of the Jewish worshiper.

7. They go from strength to strength, *every one of them* in Zion appeareth before God.

The thought is that every one who with true heart presents himself before God in Zion, advances from one stage of spiritual strength to another. It is a way of soul-progress, analogous to the progress made in the journey from one stage to another.

8. O LORD God of hosts, hear my prayer: give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.

The temple was the place, its seasons of festival worship, the time pre-eminently for *prayer*. This was their glory. Hence the emphasis of the verse before us. The pious worshiper is called on to pour out his soul in prayer to the Lord God of Hosts, the God of Jacob—this name of the aged patriarch being specially suggestive of struggling, prevailing prayer.

9. Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.

This does not mean, Look, O God, upon our shield; but rather, Do thou, O God, who art our shield, look on the face of thine anointed who is at once our king and thy servant. V. 11 shows that the Lord God is thought of as both "sun" and "shield," the fountain of our light and the arm of our military defense.——The prayer is that he would regard with merciful favor the King then on the throne of David, since the prosperity of the whole people hinged upon the divine mercy toward him. The words are specially pertinent to be applied under the gospel to Jesus who fills the full idea of Israel's king as the medium of all blessings to God's people.

10. For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

"Better than a thousand," *i. e.*, than a thousand elsewhere. "Be a door-keeper," seems to mean precisely, *be on the threshold*, perhaps waiting for admittance, or having only the privilege of furtive glances at the glories within; yet even this I choose before dwelling in the tents of wickedness with all their luxuries and surroundings. This was a grand sentiment to be sung in those times of Hezekiah's revival of the temple worship, to be heralded through all the tribes of Israel in the summons which invited them to gather in the temple before the God of Zion.

11. For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: the LORD will give grace and glory: no good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

12. O LORD of hosts, blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

"Sun and shield," dispelling all darkness; supplying all light, warmth, fertility, beauty, every thing we need and love that is better than eternal frost and endless night.——Our "*Shield*," protecting us evermore from all enemies and guarantying our perpetual safety.——"Will give grace and glory," grace here and glory hereafter; spiritual aid and power against all earthly want through all life's struggles; but the glory of heaven in the eternal future. It is every thing to say of him that he will withhold no good thing from those who sincerely labor to please him, evermore ordering their way uprightly. Must it not be infinitely blessed to have such trust in the great God?

PSALM LXXXV.

This Psalm celebrates some signal deliverance wrought by the Lord for his people, connected, as in the nature of the case such manifestations of God's hand must always have been, with the repentance of the people and God's gracious forgiveness of their sin. The Psalmist prays for yet other blessings; that God would still avert his displeasure more and more, and reveal his mercy in the salvation of his people.——Critics locate the historic references of the Psalm variously; some [Wordsworth] to the restoration of David to the throne after the revolt of Absalom; others [Smith] to the revival of religion under Hezekiah; others still to the restoration from Babylon. In support of the latter is urged the words of v. 1—"brought back the captivity of Jacob"—also the fitness of the Psalm to the circumstances of that case. Two considerations have great weight with me in favor of dating the Psalm in the times of Hezekiah: (*a*) That it puts religious reform in the foreground, corresponding fully to the facts in the first years of Hezekiah, but less so to the times of David's restoration from his temporary exile, or to the restoration from Babylon. ——(*b*) That this theory is in keeping with the date of the Psalms that precede it, and therefore accounts for its being placed here by the compilers. It is safe to assume that the compilers had far more knowledge than we can have as to the author, date, and occasion of these Psalms; and further, that they usually arranged them with a fair measure of regard to their mutual relations to each other.

1. LORD, thou hast been favorable unto thy land: thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.

"Favorable," in the sense of propitious, merciful.——"Brought back the captivity," etc. In its primary and strict sense this must mean that God had restored his exiled people to their country. But in consequence of the modes of ancient warfare, the driving of a people from their home and country, and their restoration again were so common that naturally this phrase came to be used for other signal blessings, tacitly compared with this. Thus God turned again the captivity of Job (42: 10) when he only lifted from him that heavy hand which he had laid upon him and gave him back the blessings wrested so remarkably away. Other cases of this figurative use of the phrase where no real captivity is thought of occur Ezek. 16: 53, and Ps. 14: 7, and 53: 6. Hence it can not be inferred from this language that the Psalm refers to the actual restoration from Babylon or from any real captivity. Some other signal blessing may be thought of.

2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people; thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.

3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

It will be readily seen that the *forgiveness of the nation's sins* is made boldly prominent here, emphasized by "Selah." This fact aptly meets the case of the people in the beginning of Hezekiah's reign. The preceding reign of Ahaz had introduced gross forms of idolatry; had outraged Jehovah and the public worship at his temple, and brought great wrath upon the nation. Hezekiah came to the throne with his first thought upon bringing the people back penitently to God and propitiating his favor. Nothing could be more appropriate therefore than to celebrate God's redeeming mercy in the songs of the sanctuary, as here. The reader may profitably study the history of Ahaz as given 2 Kings 16, and 2 Chron. 28; and the history of Hezekiah as found 2 Kings 18, and 2 Chron. 29–32.

4. Turn us, O God of our salvation, and cause thine anger toward us to cease.

5. Wilt thou be angry with us forever? wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?

6. Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?

7. Show us thy mercy, O LORD, and grant us thy salvation.

As it stands here this is prayer for the nation, yet is entirely appropriate for any community or any church.——"O God of our salvation," thou hast often saved thy people in times past; therefore we confide in thee for blessings now.——In v. 6 the Hebrew reads, Wilt thou not *return* and revive us; come back to us and quicken us to new spiritual life. Obviously, "revive"—cause us

to live again—contemplates spiritual and not chiefly temporal blessings.——The last clause may be read—"And shall not thy people rejoice in thee?" The connecting word is *and* rather than "that."

8. I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly.

The precise sense of the original is rather—Let me hear; let me listen carefully to what the Lord will say in reply to these prayers. Surely it comes from his very nature that he will speak peace to his penitent, suppliant people. But let them stand to their professions of penitence; let them persist in the ways of a reformed and holy life and not turn back again to their old sins—well spoken of here as "*folly.*"

9. Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him; that glory may dwell in our land.

This word for "surely" so often means *only* that it may perhaps be better to read it so here. To those and those only who fear him, his salvation is nigh. This is always true, and the truth should forever bring assurance of hope to those who earnestly seek the Lord.——"To the end that glory may dwell in our land"—"glory" in the sense of God's manifested presence, as in the visible glory of the Holy of holies, the symbol of Jehovah's presence with his worshiping people. Thus understood the word carries with it all the subordinate manifestations of Jehovah's presence with his penitent people.

10. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed *each other.*

11. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.

Exegetically the first and main question here is whether these words—"mercy," "truth," "righteousness," "peace," are all to be taken as attributes of God, or whether part of them speak of qualities of men. Does the passage describe the harmonious interaction of God's attributes; or the reciprocity between God and man, *i. e.*, the relation between God's manifested mercy and man's faithful obedience; God's clemency and man's peaceful prosperity?——V. 11 seems to favor the latter construction; truth springing up, like other growths, from the earth, while righteousness looks out and down upon the race from heaven. So also the previous context—salvation from God nigh to those among men who fear him; *i. e.*, a beautiful commerce between the Father above and his children below.——"Truth" will bear the sense of fidelity to covenant vows in the case of God's people and so be applicable to men. When truth on man's part, thus understood, and mercy on

God's part, "meet together," there is a loving accord between the true-hearted child and the beneficent Father.——"Righteousness" here is not justice in its sternest aspect, but clemency—such as looks graciously from heaven upon humble penitents who put themselves before God where he can forgive them freely, and as to the justice of his throne, safely. This quality of God's character insures the prosperity and peace of his children. Here, too, the clemency of God kisses the obedience of men and sheds forth on them the best of blessings—all peace and prosperity.

These remarks give the reader one of the two possible constructions. There is another possible construction, the alternative of this. Between the two, our choice is to be made. It supposes that these four terms—mercy, truth, righteousness, peace—are all attributes of God. It also supposes that these attributes are thought of here, not as they exist abstractly in the divine mind, but as they stand related to men. The conception is that the sins of men bring these qualities of the mind of God into struggle, not to say conflict; while the penitence and obedience of men restore harmony. To put the case more plainly: When man sinned, God's justice said, man must die, and his truth was pledged to this penalty. But mercy—compassion—pleaded, struggled, and, shall we say it? contested. There was conflict in the divine mind. So himself represents: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim?"—— Now let the sinner become thoroughly penitent and humble. Let atonement provide for safe pardon, and let the sinner accept pardon on the basis of this atonement. Then all conflict in the divine mind ceases. Mercy and truth meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other. There is untold joy in the bosom of infinite love! This is the second construction.——On either we must take the passage as poetry—genuine and beautiful poetry. These abstract qualities are personified; they take on the forms and the spirit, too, of life. We may think of them as angels from the heavenly throne coming forth to manifest God to men, in the one case, to show the loving accord which reigns among all the elements of the infinite mind over and toward his creature man now that he is a penitent child; in the other, witnessing to the reciprocity of affection between the loving Father and his penitent children, and the free interchange and communion between the infinite and the finite, as in prayer offered—prayer answered; obedience required, obedience paid.——As to the choice between these two constructions; it is easy to see that either brings out results that are true; indeed that are very precious truth. It may perhaps be said that v. 10, taken apart from its connection, is explained more naturally on the last named construction than on the first. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the context favors the first named. The drift of thought here is of commerce between heaven and earth—transactions between the God above and his children below. God will speak peace to his people. His salvation is nigh to his hearers. Truth is thought of as *springing up* like other things

that grow out of the earth; while righteousness looks down lovingly from heaven. The Lord gives the good; the land and man receive it.

12. Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good; and our land shall yield her increase.

13. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

"The Lord will give *the* good" [So the Hebrew], *i. e.*, the good promised in his word to the obedient; with probable reference to the standard passages in the Mosaic law, (*e. g.*, Lev. 26; 3, 4, and Deut. 11: 13–15, etc.).——"Righteousness shall go before him"—be manifested continually in his presence.——"And shall make his steps for a way" [so the Hebrew]—an expression which puts in strong light the example which God holds up before his people to guide their life and which had its full development when the Son of God, incarnate, planted his own foot-steps on this earth, and made them *the way* for his people's steps in all their earthly life.

PSALM LXXXVI.

On this Psalm the first question is that of authorship. The caption ascribes it to David. If so, in what sense is it his, and why does it appear in this third book (Ps. 73–89), in which we have no other Psalm ascribed to David and no other (probably) belonging to his age?——The Psalm stands here preceded and followed by Psalms of the age of Hezekiah. It seems to be put here because of its natural and fit relations, both to the one before it and the one after it. It is also every way appropriate to the reformation under Hezekiah, when the nation went down upon its knees before God, and to Hezekiah personally, for he led the people in this humiliation and prayer for mercy. In what sense then is this a Psalm of David? Was it really written in this form by him, yet omitted—overlooked perhaps—in making up Book I (Ps. 1–41), which are exclusively his; and also in the compilation of Book II (Ps. 42–72), about half of which are his? Did it afterward come to light and find place here because appropriate in this connection? There is nothing impossible in these suppositions.——Or, again, is it called David's because, though written out by Hezekiah, it was made up by taking its several paragraphs from the earlier Psalms of David? Shall it be regarded as precisely a compilation from various Psalms of David, brought together in the time of Hezekiah because specially appropriate to his times? This may have been its history.—— Still another hypothesis assumes that Hezekiah was its author and is called David because he was a lineal descendant and king on David's throne, and bearing up the religious work of David

pre-eminently. Those who adopt this hypothesis refer for authority to the sons of Asaph and the sons of Korah, who each bore for ages the name of their father; also to the well known fact that the Messiah as the prophetic son of David, bears in several prophecies the very name, David. This question will come up again in Book IV, which has two Psalms under the name of David, and in Book V, which has fifteen. If the whole question turned on the merits of this particular case, either the first supposition or the second would be preferable to the third.

This Psalm is pertinently called "a prayer." Every verse, every word, might be fitly used in prayer. It is also beautifully appropriate to the great reformation in the times of Hezekiah, and certainly not otherwise than appropriate to the case of David in the times of Absalom. But it seems to me most probable that the compilers put it here because of its fit connection with other contiguous Psalms of Hezekiah's time, and because of its actual use in that age.

1. Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: for I *am* poor and needy.

2. Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.

As usual in the Psalms "poor" is frail, weak, dependent, not necessarily pennyless.——"Preserve my soul," *i. e.*, my *life*. "For I am holy"—in the sense of pious, one of thy devoted worshipers.——Save thy servant who trusteth in thee—this being the plea: Will not the Great King take care of his trusting, faithful servants?

3. Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily.

4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.

"Daily"—Hebrew, *all* the day—all the time, constantly.——"Rejoice the soul"—make me exceedingly glad, *fill* me with joy in thee, for I lift up my soul to thee for the full blessings of thy presence.

5. For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.

The argument here is drawn from God's declared and known nature. He proclaimed his name to Moses (Ex. 34: 5, 6), expanding the compassionate, forgiving, loving elements of his character in times like these.

6. Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer: and attend to the voice of my supplications.

7. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.

We need never shrink from prayer because it is our time of trouble, so be it we have honestly served God in our better days. With all his heart the Lord invites his faithful ones to come to him in every trouble, and justifies the assurance expressed here: "for thou wilt answer me."

8. Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord; neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.

"Among the gods"—gods of the heathen, made with their own fingers. The Psalmist need not be supposed to imply that those gods are any thing at all beyond the wood and stone, the gold and silver, that make up their images. Infinitely far are they from being like the Lord Jehovah, the Maker and Former of all things. The last clause reads precisely: "And there is nothing like thy works." His thought is: Nothing which heathen gods profess to do can begin to compare with what thou hast done.

9. All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.

10. For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous things: thou *art* God alone.

From the infinite superiority of the true God above all idols, the Psalmist comes to the grand result that the truth of the case will ultimately triumph; all the Heathen nations will one day cast away their empty gods and give their heart's entire love and homage to the Lord Jehovah. He loves to enlarge upon the reason why—"For thou art great; thou doest wondrous things; thou only art really *God*." This is a perfect reason. There is infinite fitness that the supreme and only God should at length place himself at the head of this world, its acknowledged Lord and King—its one only object of supreme love and obedience. So let it be! And let the time thereof hasten on!

11. Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.

Every word here is beautiful and strong. "Point out to me thy way;" as with the extended finger, indicate the path for me to tread. I will walk *earnestly*—the intensive form of the Hebrew verb—in thy truth; *i. e.*, according to all which thy revealed truth shall prescribe.——"Unite my heart;" combine all its utmost powers; help me to concentrate every thought and affection upon filial, reverential obedience. Let not my heart be *divided*—given partly to other objects than thyself.

12. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name for evermore.

13. For great *is* thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.

This is thoroughly in the spirit of the previous words—praise with all the heart, glorifying God's name, not transiently, not with fluctuating, fickle love, but most heartily and forever. The good and sufficient reason follows—"for thy mercy toward me is great, very great; thou hast rescued me from death—literally, "my life from the lower Sheol"—from going down to the under world. Hebrew usage compels us to interpret this of natural death, from which the Psalmist had been delivered. See Ps. 6 : 5, and 88, 10–12, and 18 : 5, and Deut. 32 : 22, where these very words occur.

14. O God, the proud are risen against me, and the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul; and have not set thee before them.

15. But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.

Personally, this applies well to the case of David, long the object of Saul's vengeance; then for a time, of the more organized assemblies of violent men under military arms, headed by Absalom. Nationally, it meets the case of Hezekiah against whom the proud Assyrian came up with a mighty host and with no fear of God before his eyes. But the compassionate loving-kindness of Israel's God proved his refuge.

16. O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and save the son of thine handmaid.

17. Show me a token for good; that they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed: because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

This prayer is for some visible manifestation of God's mercy to his people which shall command the attention of his enemies, shall confound them with shame and make them know that the Most High God has truly appeared for his people. The overthrow of the Assyrian host completely answered this prayer. God takes delight in hearing such prayer to the end of such results. It exalts his name and puts forward the great interests of his kingdom.

PSALM LXXXVII.

This jubilant song by the sons of Korah must be dated in the times of Hezekiah for the following reasons: (*a*) Presumptively we may assume this because the Psalms that precede and that follow belong to those times.——(*b*) The five Gentiles nations named here were prominent in that age, while in the age of David, Egypt was not known under the name Rahab, and Babylon was scarcely

if at all known on the map of the nations. See Isa. 30: 7, and 51: 9. The name appears also in Ps. 89: 10, but this belongs to the age of Hezekiah.—(*c*) The prophetic sentiment of this Psalm, viz., the conversion of all the great nations of the earth to the true God, is remarkably in harmony with the prophecies of Isaiah, which were suggested by the same event—the fall of the Assyrian hosts and God's glorious triumphs therein. See Isa. 10–12, and 17: 12–14, with chap. 18: 7, and 19: 23–25 and my Notes on these passages. This coincidence is very remarkable, showing that this great thought was not in the mind of Isaiah alone but belonged to that age; that the good men of Hezekiah's time saw in that wonderful overthrow of Assyria a sure presage of the fall of every opposing power and of the conversion of the great nations of the earth to the living God.

1. His foundation *is* in the holy mountains.

"His foundation"—the place of his abode, where the strong pillars of his earthly temple are laid—is in the holy mountains, *i. e.*, of Jerusalem, made sacred ages before by God's choice of them as the site of his house. The words chosen in this verse suggest firmness, stability,—a footing that can not be shaken.

2. The LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob.

3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.

This special love for Zion had been evinced in his choice of her for the site of his tabernacle and temple. It had been demonstrated freshly in the fact that while the Assyrian host had swept the entire Northern kingdom, besieged and destroyed Samaria, and ravaged portions of the territory of Judah, the "daughter of Zion had laughed their king to scorn" (Isa. 37: 22), and God had signally avenged her upon her proud assailants.——"Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!" Had the writer of this Psalm read the glowing and glorious words of Isaiah? He began to prophecy in the reign of Uzziah who died at least thirty-two years before Hezekiah came to his throne, and forty-six years before Sennacherib's expedition and fall. Micah was of the same age; indeed this was pre-eminently an age in which "glorious things were spoken of Zion." The spirit of exultant prophecy pervaded the inspired writers of that time. Well might the sons of Korah write "Selah" after the expression of a thought so suggestive. Let every reader pause and think of it! In our times we may profitably read over and dwell long upon these "glorious things" as we find them in Isa. 2, and 9, and 11, and 12, and 35; not to name also his later prophecies—Chap. 42, and 49, and 54, and 55, and 60, and 66—also Micah 4 and 5.

4. I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them

that know me: behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this *man* was born there.

5. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the Highest himself shall establish her.

6. The LORD shall count, when he writeth up the people, *that* this *man* was born there. Selah.

As said above "Rahab" is but another name for Egypt, signifying the proud one. "Them that know me," are my friends and people. To them God says, I will name Egypt and Babylon—the great rival nations of that and subsequent ages—as born to the God of Zion. See also Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia; this one, each and all of these, were born to God there, *i. e.*, in Zion. "*Man*" is by no means the word to supply in the last clause of v. 4. This *one* means this *nation*, and in this connection, each of these nations. Of Zion it shall be said, this one and that one [not this *man* and that *man*] were born in her. In the writing up of the peoples brought home to God it shall be recorded that all these nations were born to him in Zion. This way of putting it, the reader will observe, is precisely that of all the Old Testament prophets. "The nations shall flow unto it," the mountain of the Lord's house. (Isa. 2: 2). "Many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the Lord" (Zech. 8: 22). So throughout those ancient prophecies, the Gentile nations come up in vast masses, flying as doves to their window-cotes, to learn of God and to give him the homage of their hearts, *in Zion*. A pious Hebrew, always trained to the idea of but one place for acceptable worship, could not think of the conversion of Gentiles as taking place in any other way.——Here again "Selah" is altogether in place. Let all readers contemplate these marvelous things said of the future Zion of the Lord Jehovah.

7. As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there:* all my springs *are* in thee.

It seems better to supply the words, *say, are saying, are proclaiming aloud*, rather than, "Shall be there," thus: Both the singers and the instrumental players [or dancers] *are proclaiming*, "All my springs are in thee." The whole chorus shout these richly expressive words: In God is the fountain of all my joy! I can trust him for all blessings on his Zion, and indeed, on the nations of the whole earth.——"In thee" may perhaps refer primarily to Zion rather than directly to God; but if so, to Zion only as the place of Jehovah's manifestations, made sacred and lovely and a fountain of blessings only because *God is there.*—— For explanation of the word "springs" ["all my springs"] see Ps. 84: 6, also Joel 3: 18, and Zech. 13: 1, and 14: 8, and Ezek. 47; 1–12, also Isa. 12: 3, and 35: 6, and 44: 3, 4.

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This Psalm is more intensely and unqualifiedly plaintive than any other in the entire collection. The other plaintive Psalms have some shades of light—at least a little "silver lining to the cloud;" but this, taken by itself, has none. We may emphasize the words, "taken by itself," and look at the evidence that the compiler (perhaps the writer) never intended it should stand by itself, out of connection with the Psalm next following. Observe the caption to Psalm 88 says, "*a song;*" but in every other case the songs are jubilant—as this will be in a fair measure when associated with Ps. 89. But stronger yet is the circumstance that the closing verses of Ps. 89 (vs. 46–51) resume the tone and indeed the very words of this Psalm 88. The previous verses, especially vs. 1–37, give the consolatory side—the considerations, hopeful and inspiring, which relieve the darkness of the affliction. This fact certainly goes far to show that these two Psalms were at least compiled, if not composed, to go together—a pair, neither complete without the other. It does not forbid this conclusion that Heman wrote the one and Ethan the other, for they may have done their parts of the common work in concert. The unusually long and full caption to Ps. 88, may belong in a measure to both, Ps. 89 having only the author's name, with no allusion to his subject.

Before we attempt to locate these Psalms in history, it were well to settle this preliminary point: Are we to assume that this affliction is personal, or is it only national? Is this afflicted man, "I," an individual man, or a representative man speaking for the nation?——I am compelled to take the former alternative—as being in harmony with all the other Psalms of kindred character; as being the only natural hypothesis—and certainly the writing of the Bible is pre-eminently natural; men speak and write as they feel. There is nothing here that looks like *ideal painting*—a setting forth of public calamity in words and figures borrowed from the individual life. I shall therefore assume that the writer represents the personal individual sorrows, either of himself or of some other man.——Can we locate this Psalm, or rather these two Psalms, in history?——(1) The place assigned them by the compilers in this Book III, would put them in the age of Hezekiah. Eight Psalms immediately preceding (80–87) we have located in his age, as also Ps. 75 and 76. As these two (88 and 89) close the third Book, the presumptive evidence is strong for this date.——(2) Conclusive to the same point is the striking harmony between these two Psalms on the one hand, and on the other the prayer and song of Hezekiah on the occasion of his sickness and recovery. These appear most fully in Isa. 38—the prayer in brief; the thanksgiving song in full. This song goes back to paint the bitterness and sorrow of his soul in the near prospect of death, making largely the same points which appear in Ps. 88. Then the covenant of God with David and his royal line, drawn out so fully and vividly

in Ps. 89: 1–37 was manifestly the strong hold of Hezekiah in his prayer and is indicated in God's answer: "Thus saith the Lord, *the God of David thy father.*" Comparing these Psalms with those fragmentary records, we can not say less than that these are a *companion-piece* to those—the same subject taken up by deeply sympathizing friends and filled out in form adapted to the public worship of the temple. A matter of so deep public interest was surely a most appropriate theme for the songs of the sanctuary. ——The names of Heman and Ethan appear among the leading musicians 1 Chron. 15: 17, 19. The word "Mahalath" brings up the usual question between reference to a musical choir, the name of a tune, or the proper meaning of the word, viz., sickness. I favor the latter. See Ps. 53, the only other case of its similar use. ——"Leannoth" means, *to afflict*, affliction, *i. e.*, sickness for the purpose of moral trial.

1. O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day *and* night before thee:
2. Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry;
3. For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.

The reader will note that this is most earnest prayer, most per sistent also, "day and night," the reason assigned being—"my soul is full, sated, with the very utmost I can bear of trouble"—the comprehensive cause being a sickness that threatened speedy death. Such was the case with Hezekiah. He not only had upon him a disease usually fatal, but he had the very word of the Lord—"Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live" (2 Kings 20: 1).

4. For I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that *hath* no strength:
5. Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.

"I am counted"—regarded as of those who are just going down into the grave. I am like a strong man, suddenly become powerless. The transition was most sudden from the vigor of the strong man * to the prostration of mortal sickness.——In the phrase, "free among the dead," the word for "free" has been taken by many to be the Mosaic term for one emancipated—set *free*. But the problem then has been to find any proper application of the word in this sense to the present case. The later critics are relieved of this difficulty by taking the word in the sense of *couch*—"my couch is with the dead." I am so near to the dead that I already seem to lie among them and to be of them.——"Whom

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Thou rememberest no more; they are cut off from thy hand," in the sense of being no longer the object of thy care, as the living are. This was one of the bitter things in this lot as it stood before the Psalmist's mind. So Hezekiah said, "I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord, in the land of the living;" *i. e.*, I shall no more see his faithful mercies as the true Jehovah, manifested to me.

6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.

7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted *me* with all thy waves. Selah.

"Afflicted me with all thy waves" reminds us of the words of David (Ps. 42: 7): "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me;" and of Jonah: "All thy billows and thy waves passed over me" (Jonah 2: 3)—as one cast away amid the rough breakers, every wave sweeping over him.

8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; thou hast made me an abomination unto them: *I am* shut up, and I can not come forth.

In what sense this was true of Hezekiah we know too little of his history to say positively, and should have the same difficulty in applying it to David at any point when he was, as here represented, near death. May it be taken to express the feelings of one who seems to himself to move off *alone*, *unattended*, to go down the Jordan bank and launch away with none about him who can in any wise sympathize with the new, strange, and fearful facts of his case? Does it not *seem* to him that they stand aloof as men stand afar from the leper?——He says, I am held fast by bands I can not sever, as within prison-walls from which I can not come forth.

9. Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: LORD, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

"Mine eye *mourneth*"—but this word fails to give the full sense, which is; my vision pales; all things become dark. Yet, O Lord, how I have prayed, thou knowest! Still thou hearest not.—— Hezekiah's prayer has the words: "Mine eyes fail with looking upward" (Isa. 38: 14).

10. Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.

11. Shall thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? *or* thy faithfulness in destruction?

12. Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?

All these questions are in one strain. "Wilt thou show won

ders," *i. e.*, of delivering mercy, of thine interposing hand—"to the dead?" "Shall the *dead*"—a different word from the former and meaning the *shades*, the disembodied souls—shall they arise and praise thee? This, it may be noted, was a leading point made in Hezekiah's song: "for the grave can not praise thee; death can not celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit can not hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day" (Isa. 38: 18, 19).——"Selah" shows that this was a special point.——"Thy faithfulness in destruction"—"destruction" being used synonymously with "grave." "In the dark," since they conceived of the under world as one of darkness. Job (10: 21, 22) puts the ancient oriental view thus: "Before I go whence I shall not return, even to a land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself and of the shadow of death without any order and where the light is as darkness." "In the land of forgetfulness" may mean, not a land where the people thereof forget every thing and sink into unconsciousness, but a land where the people are soon forgotten by all the living. As Solomon has it: "The memory of them is forgotten; they have no portion forever in any thing that is done under the sun" (Eccl. 9: 5, 6).——The views of holy men at the age of this writing in regard to the state next after death have been discussed somewhat in my previous volumes, and need not be repeated here. See notes on Isa. 38: 18, 19, and Eccl. 9: 5, 6.

13. But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

"Prevent," as usual in Scripture in the sense of being beforehand, as if the suppliant would be on his knees before God in the earliest morning dawn. Of course this is speaking *after the manner of men*, with conceptions drawn from earthly thrones and their suppliants.

14. LORD, why castest thou off my soul? *why* hidest thou thy face from me?

15. I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth up: *while* I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.

It is not clear why the writer should say—"Ready to die" [literally, dying—the present participle always for the present tense]—"from my youth up." It is, however, a fact of human experience that scenes of fearful suffering and terrible trial may take such exclusive possession of the mind as to cast all one's preceding life into the shade and almost wipe it out from memory, leaving the present to *seem* to represent all the past. Perhaps this law of our mind gives the clew to the language before us.——The tenses of the last clause are, "I *have* borne thy terrors; I *shall* be distracted."

16. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off.

17. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.

18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, *and* mine acquaintance into darkness.

These words essentially repeat points previously made, but serve to show how intense his sufferings were and how fearful the trial to which his soul was subjected.——But out of man's deepest, bitterest woes God can bring up his saints to sweet submission, placid trust, and joyful thanksgiving, as the case of Hezekiah bears witness, and as the next Psalm, taken as one of a pair with this, suffices to show.

PSALM LXXXIX.

In the remarks introductory to Ps. 88, it was suggested that this Psalm is one of a pair with that, both being of the times of Hezekiah, and occasioned by his extraordinary sickness, his sentence to death, his restoration in answer to prayer, and his thanksgiving song therefor. Heman and Ethan, doubtless personal friends of his, bearing responsibilities in the service of song in the house of the Lord, sometimes writing Psalms as well as conducting the music, may be supposed to have been perfectly in sympathy with him and competent to express his thoughts and emotions in Psalm and music adapted to public worship.——Heman, in Ps. 88, gave exclusively the plaintive side. Ethan, during the greater part of Psalm 89, gives the joyful side—the considerations that sustain hope and faith in God, and especially such as were adapted to the case of Hezekiah. We can readily see that the strong ground for him to rest on was God's covenant with David for himself and his royal offspring. Hezekiah held his throne as one of that line. All his hopes therefore reposed on God's faithfulness to that covenant. That in vs. 38–51 Ethan reverts to the other side of the case, shows only that he proposes to give, not merely a part, but substantially the whole of Hezekiah's thoughts and feelings. The covenant itself provided that if David's posterity forsook God's law (vs. 30–32) he would visit their transgressions with the rod. Hezekiah's father, Ahaz, and his son, Manasseh, were both fearfully guilty, and both fell under this terrible scourge of God—not to say that Hezekiah had on his own personal account some reason to confess sin and implore forgiveness and mercy. Hence these points belong legitimately in this Psalm.

1. I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.

Assuming that Ethan proposes to himself to give a counterpiece to the song of Heman (Ps. 88), we may paraphrase this verse thus: I admit there is a dark side to human life; there are emergencies when clouds and darkness gather thick upon us, as we have seen in the case of our beloved king; but there are bright scenes in human life as well as dark, and no darkness ought ever to shut off all thought of God's love to us; therefore "let me sing the mercies of the Lord forever!"——"Let me sing" he wrote, rather than precisely "I will sing." *Let* me, for my heart is in it; I love it! Especially it was God's faithfulness to the promises he had made to David and his royal race which it was in his heart to celebrate. The good man then on the throne had ample reason to fall back upon those ever faithful promises as his refuge and consolation. Hezekiah need not fear the downfall of Judah's throne after what God had said to David.

2. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up forever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.

3. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant,

4. Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

"Mercy shall be built up forever"—God's scheme of salvation shall move on to its consummation, developing itself more and more with the lapse of the ages. "The scheme of God's gracious dispensations is conceived of as a building already formed and hereafter to be carried up to its completion." (Alexander).——That God's plans are thought of as more sure for being "established in the very heavens" pre-supposes that the scheme or plan is framed there, and made perfect there so as never to need or admit any subsequent change.——This covenant made with David, guarantying the perpetuity of his throne, may be seen in 2 Sam. 7, and 1 Chron. 17.——"Selah" calls special attention to this great fundamental fact.

5. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.

"The heavens shall praise," etc., the glorious ones *in* the heavens, the word "heavens" being put for the inhabitants thereof. So the parallel clause demands, "The congregation of the saints," *i. e.*, of the holy ones; not the word commonly applied to saints on the earth, but a word used of the holy in heaven, as may be seen Deut. 33: 2, 3, and Dan. 8: 13, and Zech. 14: 5, and Job 4: 18, and 15: 15.——The sentiment is that the sinless beings in heaven recognize God's wonders of mercy, and rejoice in his faithfulness to his promises.

6. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the

LORD? *who* among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?

7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all *them that are* about him.

In heaven are beings greatly exalted, of lofty powers and spotless character: yet who of them all can for a moment be compared to Jehovah?——"Sons of the mighty," ["Elim"], the angels and archangels of that glorious world—the same who are called "saints" in v. 5. This great God is worthy of supreme reverence; let all beings whether in heaven or earth accord it to him with all the heart!

8. O LORD God of hosts, who *is* a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee?

Who is strong compared with thee, O Jehovah; and thy faithfulness is inseparable from thyself, always round about thee, investing thee with the honor of immutable veracity.——The construction in the English version fails of the precise sense. It is not: Who is a strong Lord like thy faithfulness round about thee; but rather, as an after thought, thus: Who is strong like thyself; and thy faithfulness is always with thee, encircling thee; never detached; never absent.

9. Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.

10. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.

The great *strength* of Jehovah is the theme set forth here by its manifestations in nature. The swell of the sea; all its rage and pride—how mightily dost thou rule it, how easily hush its breakers down to peace!——"Rahab," a word signifying *pride*, but applied pertinently and often in this age to Egypt. This nation God had humbled in the greatness of her pride. Witness the plagues on her land and the burying of her chariots and horsemen in the Red Sea.

11. The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine: *as for* the world and the fullness thereof, thou hast founded them.

12. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.

In v. 11 the founding or building and the sustaining on their enduring foundations pertain not merely to the world and what fills it, but to the heavens and the earth, thus: "Thine the heavens; yea, thine the earth, the inhabited world and all that fill it—thou hast founded them, *i. e.*, them *all*. Creation and preservation are both embraced. Then the general idea is impressed by

being expanded into its particulars; "The north and the south," the remote quarters of the earth in those directions, thou hast created; Tabor—the great mountain on the west; Hermon, the corresponding peak on the east, representing those quarters of the globe—all rejoicing in thy *name, i. e.*, in the ever present agencies of their great Creator and Preserver. Joyously do they repose under the eye and hand of their Almighty Maker!

13. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.

14. Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

"An arm with might in it," is the expressive Hebrew phrase.——"Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne;" it seems to rest on those grand qualities of thy character. Yet thy justice and thy judgment never overrule mercy. Mercy and truth march in advance of thee, ever present, always of potent influence over all thou doest.

15. Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.

16. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.

Know *what* "joyful sound?" we must ask here, for the immediate antecedent is rather implied than expressed. The scope of the context however is clear. Tabor and Hermon rejoice in God's name (v. 12); the whole earth is vocal with praises; the hosts of heaven bow reverently around the throne of Jehovah (vs. 6–8); but most blessed are the people of earth who enter into these sympathies with all the holy in the universe of God and pour forth their souls in praise and adoration. There may perhaps be an allusion to the trumpet-call which convened the people for worship on their great festival days, designated by the very word used here.

17. For thou *art* the glory of their strength: and in thy favor our horn shall be exalted.

18. For the LORD *is* our defense; and the Holy One of Israel *is* our King.

"Through thy favor our horn shall be high;" "horn" probably in the sense of *king*, who represented the strength of the nation, the horn being the symbol of strength, and the king being to the nation what the horn is to horned animals. [Daniel's visions chaps. 7 and 8 have the same symbolism—horn for king.]——In v. 18, the more exact translation is: "For our shield belongs to Jehovah; our king to the Holy One of Israel." Our king is only the Lord's servant and therefore we may rely on the Lord to sustain him.

19. Then thou spakest in vision to thy Holy One, and saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty; I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.

20. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him:

21. With whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him.

At this point the Psalmist reverts to the original call and anointing of David by Samuel—his selection as a man after God's own heart to be king of Israel.

22. The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

23. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him.

24. But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.

"Exact upon him"—the verb being commonly used for the exactions of the usurer.

25. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.

A remarkable expression, meaning: I will give him power from sea to sea, and even to the great rivers of the world, the Euphrates and the river of Egypt, both of which are named in the boundaries of the land promised to Abraham's seed.

26. He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.

Filially trusting me, he shall address me as Father, God, the Rock of his salvation. This was prominent in the promise as sent through Nathan: "I will be his Father and he shall be my son." See also how David repeats it to his son Solomon (1 Chron. 22: 10).

27. Also I will make him *my* first-born, higher than the kings of the earth.

28. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him.

29. His seed also will I make *to endure* forever, and his throne as the days of heaven.

Somewhat more than merely a son—he shall be my *first-born*, my specially favored son. The peculiar relation of Israel to the Lord is indicated by the same term (Ex. 4: 22, and Jer. 31: 9).—— The points made prominent here, viz., the perpetuity of this covenant and its eternal stability, lead the thought onward to David's greater son, the *Messiah*, in whom only were these points perfectly fulfilled.

30. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;

31. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments;

32. Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes.

Such promises were liable to grievous abuse by unworthy successors on this throne of David. Hence this admonition—so terribly effective to the chastisement of the wicked kings in David's line.

33. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.

34. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.

Chastisements and even judgments may be demanded upon corrupt individuals in this royal line, but these shall not impair the validity of the covenant. Noticeably the covenant runs sure, not to *them*—all the members in this line—but to *him*, David, as the representative of the line.——Taking into view the frailty of man in his best estate, and the degeneracy incident to royal families, this must be accounted one of the most precious features in this covenant. God would not let the corruption and moral failure of individual kings in this line go to impair the covenant itself. *That* should not be vitiated. What God had said should absolutely stand. The grand idea of one great anointed king in this royal line, to become King of kings and Lord of lords, was *in* this covenant, and no delinquencies of human sort, anywhere along the intermediate links from David to Christ, could be allowed to vacate the glorious promise, or work, on God's part, a repudiation of his covenant.

35. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.

36. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me.

37. It shall be established forever as the moon, and *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

"Once"—not in the sense of one particular time, as this word should naturally mean, but *one thing*—one point I have made sure by my solemn oath, and in this I will never prove false to David; viz., the perpetuity of his throne in his posterity. That greater Son who shall pre-eminently bear up his name, and in whom alone this covenant is to have its ultimate, unquestionable, sublime fulfillment, shall reign forever; his throne shall outlast the sun; of his dominion there shall be no end. The Hebrew writers give us their strongest averments of indefinitely long duration—of things that shall stand while the world shall last—by comparing them

with the life of the sun and of the moon. V. 37 naturally reads: "As the moon shall it [his throne] stand forever, and the witness in the heavens is sure"—the moon on the sky, and the sun perhaps as well, are the witness that God has measured the duration of this promise by the existence of the sun and the moon, hung out before mortal eyes in the heavens. "Selah" fitly calls for special attention and meditation here, before the Psalmist passes on to other points.

38. But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.

39. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant: thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.

The sudden and entire change in the course of thought at this point must strike every reflective reader as very extraordinary. It might seem to reverse the very declarations just made.——The probable explanation is, that under the presence and pressure of severe calamity, befalling the reigning monarch and the people as well, it really *appeared* as if God had broken his covenant, dishonored the crown of his own anointed One, given him up to reproach, and the whole people to ruin. The tone is singularly outspoken, not to say bold and almost irreverent. We have a case quite analogous in Ps. 44: 9–26.——"Profaned his crown to the earth"—as if God had taken it from his head and thrown it into the dust.

40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strongholds to ruin.

41. All that pass by the way spoil him: he is a reproach to his neighbors.

The same figure—a vineyard enclosed with hedge—appears in Ps. 80. In righteous chastisement of his guilty people, God suffered the natural defenses of the land to be broken down, and their military strongholds to be demolished—to their reproach before their enemies.

42. Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.

43. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, and hast not made him to stand in the battle.

44. Thou hast made his glory to cease, and cast his throne down to the ground.

45. The days of his youth thou hast shortened: thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.

In v. 44 we should read literally, "Thou hast made him to cease from his brightness," *i. e.*, thou hast dimmed the glory and brilliancy of his throne.——"Hast shortened the days of his youthful vigor,"—made him prematurely old and feeble.——Whether the

historical facts referred to here—the basis of these statements—were in the sickness of Hezekiah, or in the greater public calamities in the reign of Manasseh, it is not perhaps possible to determine.

46. How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself forever? shall thy wrath burn like fire?

47. Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?

48. What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death? shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

The implied solecism of the question, "How long wilt thou hide thyself forever?" may be obviated by making two questions: How long? Shall it be forever? Or thus: How long shall it *seem* to us that thou has cast us off finally and forever? Or, modifying the word rendered forever: How long wilt thou *continue* to cast us off with no relaxation of thy purpose?——"Think how short human life is" at best—a strain of appeal analogous to that of Hezekiah (Isa. 38: 12).——"Wherefore hast thou made man so mere a vanity," so like an empty breath?—expostulations extorted by painful and to human view disastrous death, either transpiring or near impending.

49. Lord, where *are* thy former loving-kindnesses, *which* thou swarest unto David in thy truth?

It seemed that those rich loving-kindnesses promised to David and shown so munificently to him had disappeared and were no more—were exhausted and naught of them remained! Literally the verse has two distinct clauses: "Where are thy former loving-kindnesses, O Lord?" "Thou didst sware unto David in thy truth." How then comes it to pass as we see it now?

50. Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants; *how* I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people;

51. Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

"The reproaches of thy servants" —*i. e.*, which they suffer.——The next clause stands in Hebrew—"my bearing in my bosom all the mighty people"—which might mean: I bear all their sympathies; or all their responsibilities; or all their reproaches. The word "peoples" connected with many [better than "mighty"] must refer to Gentile nations. Is there not here an allusion to the promise that all these nations shall yet come to Zion as proselytes to the true God; and that this suppliant implores God to remember that Zion bears on her heart this promise and asks how it shall ever be fulfilled if the then present state of things is permitted?——In v. 51, the word "re-

member" must be brought forward from the verse previous: "Remember, Lord, how thine enemies have reproached—have reproached the footsteps of thine Anointed." Ought not such reproach to receive thine attention?——Here the Psalm closes.

52. Blessed *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen.

This doxology is properly the close of Book III of the Psalter. A similar emphatic doxology and double "Amen" appear at the close of the first book (Ps. 41: 13) and of the second (Ps. 72: 19).

PSALM XC.

This first Psalm in Book IV is the oldest in the entire collection. There is every reason to regard this as a genuine relic of what was even then a remote antiquity—a Psalm written by Moses near the close of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness.——Its deep minor strain is readily accounted for. When the nation was less than two years out from Egypt, Moses sent twelve spies from Kadesh-barnea into Canaan to explore the land and report back to the people. Ten of the twelve brought back a report full of unbelief—its conclusions based on an utter lack of faith in God; and this in the face of all God had wrought for them in the plagues on Egypt, in the passage of the Red Sea and the glories of Sinai. The masses of the people sympathized but too deeply in this utter unbelief. The Lord's indignation against the people was deeply stirred, and he swore in his wrath that not a man of all that generation, then over twenty years of age, should ever enter Canaan, save the two faithful men, Caleb and Joshua. They were doomed to wander during forty years up and down in that wilderness, to be thinned out by pestilence; hastened to their early graves by special judgments for special sins; or swept off under the general doom of an early death, till within forty years that whole generation of adult men were dead. Therefore when the nation neared at once the confines of Canaan and the close of that forty years, Moses, then the solitary patriarch of one hundred and twenty years, with eye undimmed and "natural force unabated" (Deut. 34: 7), looked abroad upon the face of his people whom he had led through all their wilderness life, and saw not a man among them (save the two faithful spies) over sixty years of age. "The fathers, where were they?" The patriarchs, hoary with years, venerable in age—the men whose years counted like Jacob's [147]; like Joseph's [110]; or like the Levite stock [Levi, 137; Kohath, 133; Amram, 137 (Ex. 6: 16, 18, 20)]—where were they? Alas, the old men were not there! One whole class in human society was utterly blotted out! Save Caleb and Joshua, Moses could not see a man whose years numbered more than half his own. He was an old

man among a nation of children. He had long out-lived his generation. The men he had familiarly known in his boyhood were long since in their graves. And when he asked for the cause of this sad experience—the reason of these appalling facts—the answer was but too obvious—these early deaths came in judgment from God for their sins. It was under the wrath of God for their guilty unbelief that they perished long ere the usual race of human life was run.——It was amid these surroundings that Moses wrote this Ps. 90. It was the natural outgrowth of such circumstances. The sad spectacle before his eyes drew forth these plaintive strains of poetry and song from his stricken heart. It has been the lot of few men if any in the whole range of our world's history to live for years together amid bereavements so long continued, so unsparing, so universal—exempting but two men of his own generation; yet there have been hearts in plenty to respond somewhat to the mournful strains of this Psalm. Ah, who has not wept over early made graves, over dear ones cut down, according to our short vision, too soon! If death is because of sin, and if its fearfulness measures God's estimate of human guilt, then who has not had abundant occasion to see that in God's sight it is a bitter thing that a race has gone into rebellion against its Great Maker and Father? Who will not pray with Moses that God would soften these strokes of his hand, all he wisely can, and let his mercy shine out early and long, lest his creatures sink beneath his rod?

It is not a question of merely idle curiosity—Why does this Psalm of Moses stand here at the head of Book IV rather than at the head of Book I, according to its age, or rather than anywhere else?——This Book IV (Ps. 90–106) is made up chiefly of Psalms composed in the last reigns of the Jewish Kings, preceding the captivity—say from Manasseh, where Book III ends, to the fall of the city before the Chaldeans. If we may suppose it to have been compiled by Jeremiah (a suggestion I do not remember to have met with) we have at least two obvious reasons for placing this Psalm by Moses at the head of it: (*a*) That the appalling national mortality which drew forth this Psalm originally from the heart of Moses was reproduced before the eyes of Jeremiah. He too saw a nation melting rapidly away; its sons and daughters, its fathers and mothers falling thick and fast like the leaves of autumn.——(*b*) This Psalm met a quick response from the heart of "the weeping prophet." If we might suppose that various other compilers might miss its exquisite beauty, or fail to feel the whole force of its sentiments, we may be sure not a word could be lost on the heart of Jeremiah. He could not overlook, could not omit, this wonderful Psalm.

The reader will note that the caption speaks of this not as a "Psalm" or "Song" but as a "prayer." And not inappropriately. It is throughout addressed to God. There is not a word in it out of place for a prayer. After the case is fully presented before the Lord, the strain of it is closely and constantly that of suppli-

cation (vs. 12–17).——In Deut. 33: 1, Moses is called as here, "The man of God"—in words not of Moses himself but of his compiler; also in Josh. 14: 6—the words of Caleb; and in Ezra 3: 2—the words of Ezra. A few other distinguished prophets have been so called; none more fitly than Moses.——As to the *internal* evidence that Moses wrote this Psalm, Dr. Alexander has well condensed the points thus: "Its unique simplicity and grandeur, its appropriateness to his times and circumstances, its resemblance to the Law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked unlikeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally, the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author." (Vol. II: pg. 295).

1. LORD, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.

"Our dwelling-place"—our home [so the Hebrew] or place of *rest*. Ranging this houseless desert; plowing these trackless sands; clambering these stony hills; threading these treeless valleys, with never a place of rest anywhere to the soles of our weary feet—such is our life, and it is only when our eye rests on the pillar of thy glory standing above our sacred tent that we get the first idea of a *home*. In a wilderness, if God dwells in it, there may be a *home*, but it must be in God only. So it was with our fathers, the patriarchs, in their wanderings. Their God was their dwelling-place through all their generations. Apart from God there was no sense of *home* in their souls.

2. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God.

The conceptions are poetic: "Before the mountains were *born*, or ere thou hadst brought forth the earth" [this globe] "and the world" [the surface considered as inhabited].——"From everlasting to everlasting"—back into the depths of a past eternity and onward through the measureless years of the future, thou art evermore the same—the Mighty God ["El"]. The course of thought seems to be: Thou, O Jehovah, who hast been the dwelling-place of all the patriarchs—of Abraham and Jacob, of Enoch and of Abel—there is no measuring thine endless years. The longest human lives are less than units in this poor attempt toward a time-computation of thy being.

3. Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men.

But man's days are far otherwise. Alas, the contrast! "Thou turnest man to *destruction*," the word used by Moses signifying a thing smitten and broken into fine dust. The conception seems to be that man made of the dust of the earth is crushed and broken

till he is reduced to his original dust. It is put here as a second fiat of the Almighty; the first (ideally) summoning him forth from dust into organized body instinct with life; the second, remanding him back again: Return to your primeval dust, ye sons of men! It is in point here to recall the words of the Lord to Adam, then representing the race: "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3: 19). Compare also Job 10: 9, and 34: 14, 15.

4. For a thousand years in thy sight *are but* as yesterday when it is past, and *as* a watch in the night.

It is at least supposable that one thousand years is first thought of as proximately the extreme duration of antediluvian life. To Moses and to the men of his time, those human lives seemed very long; but what were they in the eye of God measured against his immortal years? Only like yesterday when it is gone—swallowed up in the great abyss of the Past; or like a watch (then the third part only) of a single night.——The words of Peter (2 Eps. 3: 8) seem to be borrowed from this Psalm: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." What are years to him whose years no lapse of time can lessen, and no count of ages on ages can ever begin to exhaust!

5. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are *as* a sleep: in the morning *they are* like grass *which* groweth up.

6. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth.

The first clause is made in Hebrew by one most expressive word for which we have no precise equivalent. We might say: Thou floodest them, save that the sense is, not pouring water over them, but sweeping them away as with a deluge, a mighty inundation. ——"A sleep are they," evanescent as a dream, or rather perhaps suggesting that, compared with the immortal untiring activities of the Infinite One, the whole of human life is but that dreamy, torpid thing we call sleep.——Or again, human life is as the grass whose whole duration of shooting up, blossoming, being cut down and withering, is pressed within one brief day—beginning with a morning, ending at the night. Alas, that such a figure should measure human life on earth!

7. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.

8. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret *sins* in the light of thy countenance.

9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told.*

"By thy wrath are we troubled," but the word used by Moses is much stronger than merely "troubled." It implies being cut off, destroyed—in forms moreover of overwhelming terror.——"In

the light of thy countenance," but this word for "light" means not precisely the light itself, but the *source* of light, the luminous body which supplies the light—the conception being, it would seem, that God's face is itself a sun, and he brings our secret sins forth and holds them before the face of this sun of the moral universe!——These verses come to the great question of the *reason why*. How comes it to pass that man's life is so short, his life-power so frail? Why are we so soon and so suddenly "consumed?" The answer is found in God's wrath toward man's sin. That terrible mortality which so soon swept off the entire adult population came of God's indignation toward them for their unbelief. They would not believe in his power to save though he had wrought most glorious and most palpable wonders of salvation before their very eyes and for their very selves! Those guilty sins God could not hide; and would not, must not, pass over! No, he must lift them up before the ages of history—spread them forth before earth and heaven, and let it be seen how much he felt insulted and abused that his people would not believe in his love, would not trust his power to save! It was a moral lesson written in blood, uttered in the groans of the dying, set forth in the ghastliness of ten thousand deaths; but there was a demand for it, and even God's compassion could not spare it! So all death follows sin and comes because sin has gone before.

9. For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale *that is told.*

The original words suggest ideas of this sort: For all our days turn and go under thy wrath; we consume [use up] our years quick as a thought. Almost in less time than we can think, they are gone! It seems to us that God's wrath for our sins abides on us through all this fleeting life.

10. The days of our years *are* threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

Quite abruptly and half as an exclamation, the Psalmist wrote: "The days of our years—in them are seventy years; and if with strength they are eighty years, yet their pride is labor and sorrow, for it hastens fast and we fly away!" "Their pride"—the best of man's days, or the manly vigor which is his chief glory. The average term of man's life-power is put at seventy years, shortened greatly from the years of their fathers before them. The recorded years of those who went down into Egypt with Jacob, range more nearly at twice seventy. But the men like Moses, of undimmed eye and unwasted life-force at one hundred and twenty, were at this writing no more to be found.

11. Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, *so is* thy wrath.

Who knows the force [and the results] of thine anger so as to appreciate thy wrath in the spirit of godly fear? Or the last clause thus: Who estimates thine indignation according to the fear it should impress?——It seems quite plain that the question "Who knoweth?" should grammatically govern the last words of the verse ["thy wrath"] as really as the preceding phrase, "the power of thine anger." The entire sentiment of the verse, therefore, is: Who has ever fully comprehended the power and the results of God's displeasure against sin, as we see them in the universal mortality of the race, and in all the pains and woes which fill this earthly life? Who estimates this with such fear of God as the facts inspire?

12. So teach *us* to number our days, that we may apply *our* hearts unto wisdom.

Help us to make such an estimate of life as shall insure real wisdom—literally, "that we may acquire a heart of wisdom." It is not merely, as in our English version, that we may set ourselves to the study of wisdom, but that we may truly gain it.

13. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants.

A prayer that God would turn his hand to blessings and mercies. "Return," to visit thy people with good, and let thy compassion be moved toward thy suffering servants. This seems to be the precise thought of the Hebrew verb which the English version puts: "Let it repent thee."

14. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

"Satisfy us with thy mercy in the morning," [Hebrew]—soon, speedily, early in our day of brief life, so that we may have joy and gladness all our days, instead of spending them all in misery and woe.

15. Make us glad according to the days *wherein* thou hast afflicted us, *and* the years *wherein* we have seen evil.

Let the years of our joy in the future be as the years of our sorrow in the past. Let a new era dawn upon us of joy and peace. no less long than the sad years of pestilence and death, through which we have wended our sorrowing way.

16. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children.

17. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Let us see thy work of redeeming mercy and saving power; let thy glory be displayed before the eyes of our children; let the beauty [*i. e.*, grace] of Jehovah, our covenant God, be upon us;

make our great national work successful, and confirm every word of thy covenant in the gift of Canaan, and in making its possession firm and sure to the generations of Israel.——This I take to be the primary sense of this closing prayer of Moses—a prayer which sacred history shows to have been abundantly fulfilled to those very children whose fathers fell so fearfully in the wilderness. The generation that went over into Canaan under Joshua had the fear of God before their eyes and stood up staunchly to the obligations of their holy covenant. The Almighty God therefore placed himself at the head of their marching hosts; his own working hand appeared manifestly unto his servants, his glory to their children; and Canaan was indeed established unto Israel for an everlasting possession.

PSALM XCI.

This Psalm would be full of interest, found anywhere, standing in any relations; but has peculiar interest standing here in manifestly close relations to Psalm 90. The slightest attention to these two Psalms will show that they are paired together, the second a counterpart to the first. The prayer of Moses has in its foreground a sweeping mortality among the people of Israel. It speaks therefore of human frailty; of man returning back to dust, and of man's sin as calling forth the high displeasure of his Maker and demanding such a demonstration of it as the cutting off of a whole generation in the freshness of their manhood.——But this somber view of human life should not stand alone. There are exceptional cases. Even then when Moses wrote Ps. 90 there were before him Caleb and Joshua, hale and strong; Caleb eighty years old when the nation crossed the Jordan, and Joshua one hundred and ten at his death, and, as is supposed, ninety-three at the entrance into Canaan. Caleb testifies of himself (Josh. 14: 10, 11)—"Behold, the Lord hath kept me alive as he said these forty-five years even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, lo, I am eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me (*i. e.*, to spy out the land); as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war, both to go out and to come in." And Joshua also, aged from ninety-three to one hundred, seems to have been hale and strong for the hardships of war. So that something should be said touching the strain of this Ps. 90 by way of exception. It should be said that those who live near to God shall abide under his protection; shall be shielded against the pestilence, protected from the fierce lion and poisonous adder, put under the charge of God's sleepless angels to be kept in all their ways, and crowned with the blessings of long life and God's full salvation. Such is the tone of Ps. 91.——It scarcely need be said that these Psalms belong to an age when present retribution was far more fully the law of the divine hand toward

men than in this latter dispensation. It was an age when he who honored father and mother enjoyed long life on the land the Lord had given to his people.——Such being the scope of this Psalm and such its relations to Psalm 90, the question of author becomes one of special interest. Who wrote it? Can we get any light on this point?——It stands with no caption. The compilers are silent as to author, date, or occasion. But perhaps this very silence is itself suggestive. The ancient Jewish doctors held that a subsequent Psalm, entirely without caption, came under the caption of its immediate predecessor; stood in special relation to it; was indeed one of a pair with it, written on the same occasion, and (so they held) by the same author. And it must be admitted that this doctrine holds good throughout the first three books. The reader may easily examine the cases, viz., Ps. 1 and 2; Ps. 9 and 10; Ps. 32 and 33; Ps. 42 and 43; and Ps. 70 and 71. Here are five pairs of Psalms, all sustaining the ancient rule of the Jewish doctors.——The Jewish doctrine in respect to this coupling of Psalms—the second without caption and therefore by the same author—is not a little strengthened by the fact that at least throughout the first three books no other Psalms but these thus coupled stand without caption. All the rest have some word from the compilers at their head. In Books IV and V it is not so easy to detect the law of compilation. But as the case stands there is a somewhat strong presumption that they considered Moses the author of Ps. 91 as well as of Ps. 90. It is at least quite certain that they regarded Ps. 91, by whomsoever written, as a counterpart of Ps. 90. And this is the point of chief importance to its just interpretation.*

1. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.

The word for "dwelleth" might equally well be translated *sitteth, i. e.*, under the covert, in the hiding-place, the sequestered shelter of the Most High. This man "shall abide," lodge all night and by consequence perpetually, under the shadow of the Almighty. The sense, He who lives in great nearness to God, making God his trust and refuge, may expect *permanent* protection. Stress is laid upon God's infinite power to shield his trustful peo-

* A certain class of critics have unlimited confidence in their ability to determine who wrote (*e. g.*) this Ps. 91 from its style, from its words, grammatical forms, etc. In my view this sort of criticism has been greatly overdone and its value overestimated. For what forbids (in this case) that some later author should have wrought into this Psalm many of the words and expressions that occur in the poetical writings of Moses? On the other hand, who knows the whole range of the vocabulary of Moses? What forbids that he should put into this Ps. 91 some words found in none of his other songs? If we had in hand whole volumes from his pen, we might prepare ourselves to draw conclusions respecting his authorship of a given Psalm from his style, his choice of words. But at present our data are too limited to justify very positive conclusions from this sort of evidence.

ple by the choice of those names for God which make his power prominent. Who can be otherwise than safe with the Almighty God for his Protector?

2. I will say of the LORD, *He is* my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.

3. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, *and* from the noisome pestilence.

4. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth *shall be thy* shield and buckler.

The Hebrew has it, not *of* the Lord, but *to* the Lord; "I will say *to* the Lord:" My Refuge and Fortress art thou, etc. "In him will I trust," changes from the second person to the third, a change not uncommon in Hebrew, but especially frequent in this Psalm.——"The snare of the fowler," which may represent any form of danger. Covered under wings and feathers is a favorite Hebrew figure, open to the most common observation in the habits of domestic fowls. Our Lord has it in beautiful form (Matt. 23: 37).

5. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; *nor* for the arrow *that* flieth by day;

6. *Nor* for the pestilence *that* walketh in darkness; *nor* for the destruction *that* wasteth at noonday.

The timid will readily feel the fitness and force of this description—"the terror by night." The warriors of that age would know the meaning of "the arrow that flieth by day."——Full of pertinence is the description of the pestilence—"walking in darkness"—moving stealthily upon us in miasms which no human eye can detect, in malarious influences impalpable to every sense, but terrible in their power over the stoutest human frame. The destruction wasting at noonday is the same thing in other words. ——Here is probably a tacit allusion to those plagues that fell from the Lord upon the rebellious Hebrews in the wilderness. (See *e. g.*, Num. 11: 32, and 16: 46–49, and 25: 8, 9).

7. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; *but* it shall not come nigh thee.

8. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.

God can throw over his favored ones a protecting shield, proof against the most malignant malaria. When the plague is sweeping off its thousands at thy side, his voice can say with power: "It shall not come nigh thee." Thou shalt lift up thine eyes round about and see the retribution that is falling on the wicked. Such was precisely the case with Joshua and Caleb when the plague fell on the other spies, unbelieving, and on their adherents (Num. 14: 36–38).

9. Because thou hast made the LORD, *which is* my refuge, *even* the Most High, thy habitation;

10. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

Noticeably the word for "habitation" in v. 9, is the same which stands in the foreground of Ps. 90, there translated "dwelling-place." Because thou hast made the Lord thy dwelling-place, thy home, thy shelter, thy supreme trust. So Joshua and Caleb had done, and on this ground they said, It matters not how tall those giants of Canaan or how lofty and strong their walled cities; God can give them into our hands with infinite ease! Because they had such faith and so fully honored God by it before the nation, therefore no evil befell them; no plague touched their dwelling. So evermore with those who thus honor the Lord by a living faith.

11. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12. They shall bear thee up in *their* hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

God has angels to send, ever ready and equal to any emergency. Is any agency required which calls for some power outside of the course of nature and competent to counteract its laws? Angelic hands are in readiness. They can bear thee up that thou stumble not, nor trip thy foot against a stone.——The simplest possible solution is here of the problem: How can God bring about events in opposition to natural causes, *e. g.*, let a man, falling over a precipice, come down unhurt? "The angels shall bear thee up in their hands." What hinders? Do they not "excel in strength?" Does not the Bible attribute precisely this physical force to angelic agencies, *e. g.*, rolling the great stone from the sepulcher (Matt. 28: 2)? See also Dan. 10: 10. Who knows but their power may extend to malaria as well as to rolling heavy stones? (See 2 Sam. 24; 16, 17, and 1 Chron. 21; 15, and Isa. 36: 36.) Of one thing we may be very sure—that he who promises to protect his people is not likely to be short of agencies for the purpose.

13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

While the forms of evil mentioned here and elsewhere in this Psalm can not be held to prove absolutely that the writer was *in* the Arabian wilderness and familiar therefore by his very surroundings with wilderness life and dangers, yet it must be admitted that if he had lived and written there, he could scarcely have taken more of his illustrative cases from that life than he has done. The poisonous serpent will be remembered as among the destroyers of the people there (Num. 21: 6–9).

14. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will

I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

15. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I *will be* with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.

16. With long life will I satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

This sums up the great doctrine of the Psalm.——"Set his love upon me," attached and bound himself to me in strongest, purest affection; therefore, I will not tear him away but will deliver him from all danger. "Because he hath known my name," not with merely intellectual notions, but with knowledge working itself out in love.——"Will honor him," distinguish him from others by my special favor. "I will satisfy him with long life," give him all his heart craves; fill his largest desires.——Thus there is an offset to the mournfulness of human frailty and swift mortality. It shall be well with those that fear God and walk softly before him. Usually they have longer lives and more earthly blessings even in our age and in every age than the defiantly wicked. But even if their lives should be short in years, they are long in blessings and rich in what yields the real fruits of earthly existence—usefulness to others, and a soul cultured on earth for the purity and the rest of heaven.

PSALM XCII.

This Psalm appears with no clew to its author and has no definite historic allusions to indicate its date or occasion. It is simply "A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day"—a statement with which its contents entirely correspond. Its adaptations for Sabbath worship as in the olden time are perfect.——Its place assigned by the compilers, in Book IV, suggests the date, say of Josiah's reformation, when it became practically a great national object and aim to draw the people to the temple and interest them in sacred worship on the holy day. The leading thoughts of this Psalm—the wicked flourishing for a day, soon to perish; the righteous flourishing like the palm-tree, through long centuries, fruitful even in old age like Moses, Caleb, Joshua—are so fully in harmony with the two Psalms next preceding as to leave no room to question why it was located contiguous to those.

1. *It is* a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High:

2. To show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night,

3. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound.

"Good is it to give thanks to the Lord"—good in the sense of being appropriate, due to God, and also blessed to the worshiper. Expanding the idea, God should be praised as being the Most High and only God, and as perpetually manifesting his loving-kindness and faithfulness to his people. Let him be honored with fresh songs each morning, with new praises every night.——Let instruments of music help to swell the song and inspire the souls of the worshipers, even a lyre of ten strings; a harp also with its sweetly murmuring tones. Curiously the Hebrew word for "a solemn sound"—which however properly means either a meditation, or a gentle soft tone—is constructed here as if it were itself an instrument, and the volume of praise were borne up *upon* it as upon the ten-stringed lyre.

4. For thou, LORD, hast made me glad through thy work: I will triumph in the works of thy hands.

5. O LORD, how great are thy works! *and* thy thoughts are very deep.

The context shows sufficiently that the "works" thought of here are not primarily those of creation, but those of providence—the divine agencies in controlling human life—rewarding and punishing the well or ill doing of men. It is of these that the Psalmist exclaims: "How great are thy works; how very deep are thy thoughts"—thoughts in the sense of counsels, plans, principles of moral government. The Psalmist is in most profound sympathy with God in these works of his, for he cries out, "Thou, Lord, hast gladdened me by these works of thine;" I will shout aloud for joy because of these works of thy hand. How blessed to be in such sympathy with the great God and with ways so good and so glorious; how precious withal to consecrate our earthly Sabbaths to these most appropriate meditations and joyous praises!

6. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.

7. When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; *it is* that they shall be destroyed forever:

Expressively he wrote: "The *man-brute* will not know; the fool will not understand this," viz., that when the wicked spring up with rapid and apparently vigorous growth as the summer flowers in Palestine, it is that they may ripen soon for a swift destruction. ——The man-brute precisely translates the Hebrew words; one whom God has endowed with manhood, but who has debased himself to brutehood; a man as being of God's creation in his own image, but a brute as being self-molded (shall we say self-made?) into the image of the baser animals!

8. But thou, LORD, *art most* high for evermore.

9. For, lo, thine enemies, O LORD, for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.

The retributions demanded of a righteous God upon such wickedness and beastliness suggest the next thought; "Thou, O Lord, art most high for evermore!" How well for a universe into which *such* sin has forced its way, that God is *great*, and that he can easily destroy his enemies and scatter their mightiest forces! Look at this; "lo," contemplate this everlasting truth; *the enemies of God shall perish!*

10. But my horn shalt thou exalt like *the horn of* a unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

11. Mine eye also shall see *my desire* on mine enemies, *and* mine ears shall hear *my desire* of the wicked that rise up against me.

The speaker who says "my horn," "I shall be anointed," seems to be himself a king, perhaps Josiah, reigning under the God of Israel, anointed by his priests, and his horn [power] being lifted high by God's special favor, he expects to see his desire upon his enemies because they are also God's enemies.—— The "unicorn," by consent of modern critics, gives place to the oriental buffalo or wild ox—well known in ancient Palestine and Arabia. Job (39: 9, 10) gives a bold view of his untamed fierceness; and David (Ps. 22: 22) makes him a symbol for fierce and powerful enemies.——The Italic word "*desire*," twice used, may be omitted: "Mine eye shall look on mine enemies; mine ear shall hear of the wicked men who rise against me;" *i. e.*, shall see and hear their doom—which though not definitely expressed is yet fully implied.

12. The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.

13. Those that he planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God.

14. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing;

15. To show that the LORD *is* upright: *he is* my rock, and *there is* no unrighteousness in him.

The palm-tree is the glory of Palestine, magnificently tall and beautiful, and all its parts made useful to meet human wants. So the cedars of Lebanon are unsurpassed in grandeur. The figure which compares the righteous to the palm and the cedar is still heightened by supposing them to be planted in the house of the Lord and to flourish in the courts of his temple. Their *character*—all that which makes them righteous men and not wicked; good men and wise rather than sensual, brutish, foolish; finds its root

and life-power in the household of the Lord where God reveals his love and makes known his name and breathes his own purity into the souls of his sincere and humble worshipers. These are the great truths so beautifully clothed with oriental imagery in our passage. Such men survive to a ripe old age, fruitful all the way, living witnesses that the *Lord*, the Jehovah who keeps covenant with his people, is upright, the rock of support to his trustful children, in whom moreover there never can be the least iniquity—never a shade of unrighteousness.

PSALM XCIII.

This short Psalm is left by the compilers without a word as to its author or occasion. Its leading thought—the majesty and glory of Jehovah's reign over his creatures—is remarkably in harmony with the strain of the Psalm preceding, and leaves us therefore in no doubt why the compilers placed it here.——The thought of the Psalm is at once simple and sublime. "The Lord reigneth," all glorious, with all power; has reigned through all the ages of the past, rising infinitely above all opposing forces, and finally crowning all his glorious natural attributes with the highest moral perfections—truth and purity.

1. The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, *wherewith* he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it can not be moved.

The middle clause might well be read—"The Lord is clothed with strength; he girds it about him"—with allusion to the girding of one's loins to prepare for the fullest and freest exertion of strength.——"The world is established"—but the Hebrew term suggests the world as *inhabited*, peopled; and not the material globe itself. The reigning of God, which is in the foreground of this Psalm, is not so much the ordering of the material world as the ruling of nations and of individual men.

2. Thy throne *is* established of old; thou *art* from everlasting.

"From of old" is essentially equivalent to *from eternity*. Thy throne has always stood; it had no predecessor. No human thought can reach a point for its commencement. Thou thyself art from everlasting, and thy throne is no less ancient than thyself.

3. The floods have lifted up, O LORD, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their waves.

4. The LORD on high *is* mightier than the noise of many waters, *yea, than* the mighty waves of the sea.

Exegetically the main question on these words lies between the literal sense and the figurative; *i. e.*, whether "floods" and "their voice" mean the very waters of the earth, rushing in mighty rivers, dashing in the great breakers of the sea, or rather represent figuratively the uprising of the great forces of God's enemies. I incline to meet this question by saying, The former is the sense primarily; the latter, by implication. Because God is mightier than the rushing floods of Niagara, more grand than the breakers of old ocean in a storm, therefore he is also infinitely above the puny wrath of the fiercest and most malign of mortals.—— In v. 4 the order and construction of the Hebrew words might be put thus: "Far above the roar of the great waters, the magnificent [waters], the breakers of the sea, is Jehovah glorious on high."

5. Thy testimonies are very sure: holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, forever.

By a most beautiful transition, the Psalmist passes from the physical qualities of the Almighty to those moral perfections which are the true and highest glory of his nature—the sublimest grandeur of his throne. "Thy testimonies are faithful, very faithful;" the witness thou hast given to men of thy will and of thy love is forever reliable and sure.——"Holiness becometh thine house"—the Hebrew word ["becometh"] combining, as in Ps. 33: 1, the two ideas of beauty and fitness, expressing therefore the beauty of fitness. Holiness, moral purity, exemption from all sin, is appropriate and exquisitely beautiful in thine house—the place of thine earthly abode, where thy worshiping people meet thee face to face. Let them appear there before this faithful and glorious God with clean hands and pure heart, in the beauty of holiness.

PSALM XCIV.

In our attempt to locate this Psalm in history, we have no data except, (1) The place which the compilers gave it, *i. e.*, in Book IV and among Psalms many at least of which seem to fit the age from Manasseh to the captivity; and (2) The contents of the Psalm itself. The burden of the Psalm is complaint against abounding iniquity, and especially against the abuse of law and government by wicked rulers. The main question of the Psalm is whether this wicked administration of law is in foreign or in domestic hands, *i. e.*, whether the nation was suffering under a foreign yoke, or under the iniquitous rule of their own sovereigns. Critics differ widely as to the time and occasion of this writing, and perhaps we must say there is room for honest difference. I incline strongly to the opinion that the crying evils referred to were domestic rather than foreign, and that the Psalm contemplates the state of society under Manasseh and Amon, or more probably, under those godless sons of the good Josiah whose horrible in-

iquities appear in the prophets of that age, *e. g.*, Zephaniah, Ezekiel, and especially Jeremiah. To some extent the reasons for this opinion will naturally appear as we proceed in the Psalm.

1. O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, show thyself.

2. Lift up thyself, thou Judge of the earth: render a reward to the proud.

The most literal construction possible is full of force: "O God of revenges, Jehovah; God of revenges, shine forth." "Shine forth," *i. e.*, in manifestations of thy righteous indignation against wrong-doing, and especially against wicked ruling. "Lift up thyself"—assert thy power and right to call these wicked men to account, for thou art the Supreme Judge of all the earth and especially of this land of Israel. Therefore bring retribution upon the proud—men high in power, but lifted up in heart and recognizing no God above them.

3. LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?

4. *How long* shall they utter *and* speak hard things? *and* all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?

This language does not of itself prove that the wicked men complained of were civil rulers, but the verses next following show it. These questions are the imploring cry of one outraged by such iniquity.——"Utter"—belch forth. "Hard things"—perversions of justice; intensely, recklessly iniquitous. "Boast themselves"—literally, put themselves on high, bear themselves proudly, imperiously.

5. They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, and afflict thine heritage.

6. They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.

If we remember that those last wicked kings of Judah were at once recklessly unjust and oppressive, and also thoroughly idolatrous, and therefore hearty persecutors of all the truly good, we shall readily understand these verses.——The appeal to the God of Israel was full of force: How long shall these men hold power on the throne Thou hast set up over thy people, and murder those defenseless ones whom Thou hast made law and government to protect?

7. Yet they say, the LORD shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard *it*.

Yet with most amazing fatuity they say, Jehovah will not see; the God of Jacob, though pledged to be their Protector and Father, will not take notice! These words are not the thing to put into the mouth of the Chaldeans during or after the captivity, nor of

the Syrian Antiochus to whom some critics have referred them. They much more naturally set forth the moral blindness of Jewish kings, fearfully apostate from their nation's God.

8. Understand, ye brutish among the people: and *ye* fools, when will ye be wise?

9. He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?

10. He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, *shall not he know?*

Ye brutish ones, living among God's people, with light enough before your eyes, yet too self-blind, too madly wicked, to see!—— The Psalmist would reason a little with them. Shall he who made man's ear have no ear, no sense of hearing, for himself? He that formed the wonderful human eye, has he no eye of his own to see your guilt and folly? He that chastiseth the guilty heathen, can he fail to chasten the men who hold power under himself over his own people? Remarkably in the last clause of v. 10, the question stops midway, the point of application being too obvious to need mention: "He that teacheth man all his knowledge"—[Fill out the rest yourselves: think, What then?]

11. The LORD knoweth the thoughts of men, that they *are* vanity.

Which is here said to be vanity; man's *thoughts*, or *man* himself? Either would be true. In favor of supposing the antecedent to be "man" is urged (*a*) That "man" here really means "men," all the wicked; (*b*). That the gender of the pronoun ["they"] is masculine, corresponding therefore to "man" and not to "thoughts" which is feminine; and (*c*) That the very words used here, "man is vanity," appear in Ps. 39: 5, 11.——But over against these considerations is this one of great force—that the very thing before the mind is the brutish, senseless thoughts of wicked men who think of God as having no eye, no ear, no knowledge of man. Must not God know that such thoughts are one unutterable vanity?

12. Blessed *is* the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law;

13. That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.

Suddenly the course of thought changes. Such outrageous wickedness and persecution of the good has some indirect benefits. It may be turned to some account as discipline for the pious sufferer. "Blessed is the man, O Lord, whom thou chastenest, and at the same time teachest him out of thy law"—sustaining his heart by thy precious truth, and giving him hope for the latter end.

14. For the LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.

Certainly the Lord will not cast off his people. It may sometimes seem that he has done so; it might have seemed so to the good and faithful men who, like Jeremiah, breasted the horrid wickedness of Jehoiakim's reign, and had well-nigh sunk beneath it as Urijah (Jer. 26: 20–23) did.

15. But judgment shall return unto righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it.

"Judgment," in the precise sense of law *as administered*—the decisions of kings and courts; these shall come back to intrinsic justice. All the upright of heart shall be in sympathy with such justice and shall rejoice to follow it.

16. Who will rise up for me against the evil doers? *or* who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?

17. Unless the LORD *had been* my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.

The pious author seemed to stand almost alone. If the Lord had not been at hand to help, my soul had *soon* [better than "almost"] been in the dwelling-place of the dead—this being obviously the sense of the word "silence"—the perpetual silence of death.

18. When I said, My foot slippeth; thy mercy, O LORD, held me up.

19. In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.

"What time I said" [might say], "my foot slippeth, thy mercy, O Jehovah, held me up," and *always will.* The last verb being future affirms his assurance of help for all time as well as his sense of help for that time.——"In the multitude of my anxious thoughts, solicitudes, thy comforts were soothing and joyous to my soul."

20. Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?

"The throne of iniquity"—a throne wickedly filled, perverted to purposes of wrong. "Framing mischief" into law—giving mischief the sanction of law, and so making it far more fearful. Shall such a throne associate itself with Thee—find a Friend and Supporter in Thee—think to have thy sympathy and help? How repulsive and horrible the thought! Will the holy and righteous God lend himself to sustain such legalized iniquity? Will he throw a loving arm around such wicked rulers and comfort their hearts with his smiles?

21. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

They—those wicked rulers—come down in hostile troops upon the souls of the righteous, or, as some critics prefer, they *decide* against all righteous men. The latter sense makes a more exact parallelism with the last clause: "they condemn innocent blood. In either construction, the verse expands the thought of the throne of iniquity, framing mischief into law. Can God approve or even endure such ruling?

22. But the LORD is my defense; and my God *is* the rock of my refuge.

23. And he shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness; *yea,* the LORD our God shall cut them off.

The Lord, so intensely loving righteousness, so thoroughly hating iniquity, shall be my defense and refuge; and I surely know he will requite, nay more, will cut off the wicked who pervert their power wholly to purposes of outrageous wrong.

PSALM XCV.

We are here in the midst of Psalms (91–100), ten in succession, which the compilers arranged as we have them, but with no hint as to their author or occasion. The question as to the time of compilation is a choice between the age of Jeremiah and the age of Ezra and Nehemiah, with thus far a preponderance in favor of the former. Very manifestly Book V (Ps 107–150) belongs to the latter age—which fact is a point in favor of locating Book IV at the former period.——Obviously the date of all these Psalms turns very much upon the time when they were compiled into Book IV, and the decision of this question requires a careful examination of each Psalm of the seventeen (90–106) which make it up.—— Some have supposed that the allusion to Ps. 95, in Heb. 4: 7 ["saying in David"] proves that this Psalm was ascribed to him. But this seems rather to be a reference to the Psalter entire, as we speak of the "Psalms of David," without by any means implying that he wrote them all.——The Psalm before us witnesses for itself that it was written by some earnestly pious man in a time of religious revival. He summons the people [Jews especially] to worship their own Great and Glorious God—the Maker and Lord of all, and the covenant God, Protector and Friend of their nation, solemnly admonishing them against such unbelief and rebellion as that of their fathers in the wilderness, which incurred the displeasure and even abhorrence of their God, and shut them out of Canaan. The revival in Josiah's time meets all the conditions of the Psalm as to the time when it was written and first brought into use in public worship.

1. O come, let us sing unto the LORD; let us make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation.
2. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

As said above (Ps. 33: 3, and 66: 1, and 81: 1), the word "noise" suggests to our modern ears some unpleasant associations, of which we must presume it was innocent when introduced by our translators. This "joyful noise" is the joyous shout of the outpoured song and glad acclaim of a thousand voices lifted in praise and adoration with Psalms and thanksgiving.

3. For the LORD *is* a great God, and a great King above all gods.
4. In his hand *are* the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills *is* his also.
5. The sea *is* his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry *land*.

Not without reason, for the Lord, our Jehovah, is a Great God and a great and universal King. Think how his hand upholds the deep *places* of the earth, where the miners dig into its bowels for the precious things thereof. Also the "strength"—better, the heights or summits of the mountains are his also. The Psalmist names the lowest known localities and the highest, to give definiteness to the conception that God holds all alike in his great hand. "The sea and the dry land"—another comprehensive grouping to signify all there is of the earth's surface. Honor ye the glorious Maker of all!

6. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.
7. For he *is* our God; and we *are* the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To-day if ye will hear his voice,

The call to most devout and humble worship is enforced by the special consideration: "he is *our* God, yea, our shepherd, who both shields us from danger and feeds us in green pastures.—— The Hebrew punctuation corresponds to the division of verses in our English Bible, but not to the English punctuation. Following the Hebrew arrangement, v. 7 would read: "We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand, even this day if ye will hear his voice." That is, ye of this generation have this blessed privilege if ye will.

8. Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, *and* as *in* the day of temptation in the wilderness:
9. When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work.

The special point of the exhortation is: Do not make your heart hard by resisting this kind and earnest appeal. God speaks in love; do not repel his kindness and deaden your own moral sensibilities to the ruin of your souls.——The example of their fathers in the wilderness is brought before them to augment the force of this appeal. The Hebrew words suggest these historical allusions, and it were better that our English version should do the same, thus: "Harden not your heart as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the wilderness." (See Ex. 17: 1–7). These names were significant, Meribah meaning *strife;* Massah, temptation, with reference to their trying and proving God as if to see how much abuse he would bear.——"Saw my works;" but the Hebrew makes this slightly emphatic: "*also* they saw my works," *i. e.*, my miracles. The sense seems to be, that although they had seen most striking miracles and were then living by miracle, they could yet tempt and abuse their own divine Benefactor and withold from him their heart's confidence and love.

10. Forty years long was I grieved with *this* generation, and said, It *is* a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my way:

11. Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

"Forty years long," *i. e.*, throughout their entire wilderness life from Egypt to Canaan.——"Grieved"—the verb suggesting, however, the feeling of disgust, loathing.——"I said, a people wanderers in heart are they"—the words being an allusion to their wandering over the wilderness. That is, they are not only wanderers over barren hills and dreary wastes, but worse yet, wanderers in heart from truth and duty, from their greatest, best Friend, the God of their broken covenant.——"They have not known my ways"—not that they have had no means of knowing, but that they had no heart to know. So far as "they knew God they glorified him not as God," and therefore became only the more lost to virtue and alien from God. Hence God sware in his wrath that that generation should never enter Canaan, their promised land of rest. "Enter into my rest," refers here to the solemn oath of God, recorded Num. 14: 22, 23, 28–32. The mass of the people sinned so unreasonably, against so much light, in the presence of mercies so rich and miracles so great, the Lord could not endure them, and therefore for his own honor, and for a warning against like unbelief and sin, must, by his solemn oath, debar this whole generation from their promised Canaan. Such sin, against such light and such mercy, persisted in, must in every age and in our own, shut men out of heaven.

PSALM XCVI.

In this Psalm the summons to sing the high praises of Jehovah goes out not to Jews alone but to Gentiles also, even to all the nations of the whole earth. In this one respect it is an advance upon Ps. 95 which addresses itself specially to Jews. The strain of this beautiful Psalm is eminently simple, yet grandly sublime. Come and join with all your heart in the worship of the Great God who built the heavens. High is he above all other gods: honor and majesty invest him round about: ascribe to him the glory due to his name; come into his courts with your thank-offerings and worship him most reverently, for he is the Great King, and he cometh to judge the world in righteousness.

1. O Sing unto the LORD a new song: sing unto the LORD, all the earth.

"A *new* song," unknown to you before. Come, all ye nations of the wide earth, who, up to this hour, have been giving your worship to dead gods that were no gods at all; come and give your hearts to the true and only God in this *new* song!

2. Sing unto the LORD, bless his name; show forth his salvation from day to day.

3. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.

"Show forth his salvation"—the verb "show forth" being that which Isaiah has made sacred to the idea of *preaching the Gospel*, proclaiming its *glad tidings*. (Isa. 40: 9, and 52: 7.)——"Declare his glory" . . . "his wonders," etc.—tell all the heathen world how good and glorious is the Lord our God, and what wonders of loving-kindness he hath wrought. It will be glad news to them! ——The reader should not fail to notice that this Psalm has not only the choice words but the very spirit of Isaiah, so that we may infer with great probability that it was written after (perhaps *soon* after) the prophecies of Isaiah had made their mark on the religious mind of the nation.

4. For the LORD *is* great, and greatly to be praised; he *is* to be feared above all gods.

5. For all the gods of the nations *are* idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

Remarkably here as usually in the scriptures, the decisive test of true divinity, distinguishing the true God from all false gods, is his *creatorship*. Your heathen gods are mere *nothings* (the sense of the Hebrew word for "idols"), but Jehovah, our God, built the heavens. (Compare Ps. 95: 5, and Jer. 10: 11, 12, 16). Ought he not then to be feared and worshiped, high above all gods?

6. Honor and majesty *are* before him: strength and beauty *are* in his sanctuary.

"Honor and majesty are before him"—in the sense of being always and every-where present where he is; indeed the very outgoing manifestations of his presence; the witness of a present God.——"Strength and beauty" are in like manner revealed in his holy place where he dwells for the purpose of revealing himself to his people.

7. Give unto the LORD, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

8. Give unto the LORD the glory *due unto* his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts.

As in Ps. 29, "Give" has the sense, not of *impart*, but of *ascribe*. Recognize him as having glory and strength: award him due honor for these divine qualities.——"Bring an *offering*"—one of the Hebrew ritual terms for a thank-offering of bloodless sort. Come, all ye of the Gentile world; enter the courts of our own Supreme God with your grateful thank-offerings and your humble adorations.

9. O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth.

"In the beauty of holiness"—a phrase which I would not [with Gesenius] restrict to priestly garments;" but, rising high above such ritualistic notions, would find in it a call to offer worship to the pure and holy One with pure and holy heart, in honest sincerity. Such simple hearted sincerity is beauty in his sight—the "beauty of holiness."

10. Say among the heathen *that* the LORD reigneth: the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: he shall judge the people righteously.

Exegetically the main question in this and the contiguous Psalms respects the nature of this reigning and judging. Is it *of this world*, and if so, of nature, or of providence, or of both? Or is it at the end of this world, the final and great judgment day, including naturally the retributions of the eternal world as well? The true answer must harmonize with the genius of the Old Testament age, viz., retribution and in general the divine ruling manifested largely in the present life, yet designed to be the pledge, the guaranty, and the illustration of the retributions of the eternal world. Giving due scope to this comprehensive idea, I answer the main question above made by saying—primarily of this world, but suggestively, prophetically, of the world to come. First, here; ultimately, there. Ruling and judging among both nations and men in time, foreshadowing the greater and more perfect ruling and judging of all moral beings, yet to be, when no blending of

discipline and probation will modify or in any measure obscure the perfect development of justice and judgment according to deeds and deserts.

11. Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof.

12. Let the fields be joyful, and all that *is* therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice

13. Before the LORD: for he cometh, for he cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth.

Let all above and all below rejoice with gladness in the near development of God's reign on earth; and no less in the more remote development of his final judgment and eternal reign of righteousness. But first is that which is nearest and of time. As God proceeds to make his name and gospel more fully known on earth, with this advance of knowledge goes also a more full development of himself as Supreme Ruler and Judge.——Making himself more known in these relations he should be more heartily and reverently adored. Let the universe of intelligent beings, and indeed, through sympathy, the sea and all that fills it; the fields and all they contain and the trees of the wood as well—unite in exulting praise and gladness before the mighty Lord because he ruleth in righteousness and will bring down and bring under the cruel wrongs of sin and the very spirit of sinning—all that makes earth groan and heaven weep; all the mass of earthly woe begotten of sin and running riot over the world's peace till God comes forth to rule and judge the world in righteousness.

PSALM XCVII.

This Psalm takes up the theme with which the previous one closed: "The Lord reigneth," and gives it (we might say in musical phrase) "with variations." Here as there it is a joyful theme (v. 1); it admits of some illustrations from the history of the past (vs. 3–6); its lessons bear impressively upon the worshipers of idols (v. 7); the real Zion has joy in God's reigning (v. 8). Let the righteous see their duty herein; be assured of their reward; and joyously give thanks in the remembrance of his holiness.

1. The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad *thereof.*

"The multitude of isles," bears the mind to all remote lands of the earth lying beyond the sea. Isaiah has the same usage of the word "isles," and the same sentiment: Let them all rejoice in the

one great and glorious God! (See 42: 10, 12). The Gentile nations are assumed to have good reason for joy that such a God reigns, the ground of this assumption being either that all intelligent beings ought to rejoice in the prevalence of righteousness, or that, prophetically, it was foreseen that the moral reign of God would yet become a source of unmeasured blessings to all lands and peoples of the wide earth.

2. Clouds and darkness *are* round about him: righteousness and judgment *are* the habitation of his throne.

If in revealing himself to mortals the invisible God should deem it wise to make some visible manifestations of his presence, it is quite obvious that they must be made *under limitations*. Care must be taken to secure a feeling of reverence and awe, and to avoid that disrespect which might result from too much familiarity. Hence, the human mind and heart being what they are, there arises, we might say, a natural necessity that "clouds and darkness should gather round about him." It should not surprise us that at Sinai, in the solemn announcement of his law, God should speak forth from the thick darkness—that cloud and tempest, thunder and lightning, and the quaking of that grand and awful mount, should impress the assembled people with fear and even awe and dread. So when the Lord prepared for himself a permanent dwelling-place in the tabernacle and temple, he invested himself in "thick darkness." Eyes profanely curious were sternly barred off.——To these facts our passage seems to have primary reference. Yet let it not be overlooked that a deeper meaning is here, suggested by these historic facts and beautifully illustrated thereby, viz., that the reasons of God's ways are often, perhaps usually, too deep for our human line to fathom. Our short vision can not penetrate their mystery. Clouds and darkness gather round about him; and yet he takes care to give us abundant reasons for believing that righteousness and judgment are the basis of his throne—the principles that forever control his decisions.——Dr. Alexander pertinently remarks that "righteousness and judgment seem to be here related as the attribute and act."

3. A fire goeth before him, and burneth up his enemies round about.

4. His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled.

5. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth.

In v. 3 the verbs are future, indicating not only what has been but what will be. The meaning of these verses I take to be that God has in former ages made such manifestations of his power toward his enemies as are here described poetically, and will, yet again, when the occasion demands. There may be some allusion

to the scenes of Sinai, yet it seems more appropriate to compare the passage with Ps. 18: 7–14, and 50: 3, etc. The strain is most sublime poetry.

6. The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory.

The heavens themselves are thought of as setting forth or proclaiming what God himself proclaims and sets forth from his throne in the heavens. All the people of the earth are made to see his *glory*—in the sense of his wonderful and glorious manifestations.

7. Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all *ye* gods.

Let shame overwhelm all who serve idol gods. The word for "boast themselves" suggests that they make a vain display—precisely a *shine*, of such worship, *i. e.*, are proud of it. Instead of being thus proud, let them become intensely ashamed of such gods and of worshiping them. They *ought* to be!——"Worship him," [*i. e.*, Jehovah] "all ye gods." The remarkable thing here is that whereas idol gods are usually named, described, and held to be mere *nothings*, nonentities, here they are thought of for the moment as real existences, and are exhorted to give to the one and only Great God the homage due to him.——A notion that this view of idols is incongruous or inconsistent with the customary representation, probably led the translators of the Septuagint to write: "Let all his angels worship him." This translation of the Septuagint was used by the writer to the Hebrews (1: 6)—the words happily expressing the great fact that, at the Savior's birth, the angels came in songs of welcome and adoration (Luke 2: 13, 14).

8. Zion heard, and was glad; and the daughters of Judah rejoiced because of thy judgments, O LORD.

These words occur also in Ps. 48: 11.——"Daughters of Judah"—sometimes used for the suburban towns and villages, but more frequently for the very mothers, daughters, and sisters, with special allusion to the female voice in song, and perhaps also to the historic fact that damsels were prominent in the national songs on occasions of great victory. God's judgments on the wicked for the deliverance of the righteous and the support of intrinsic righteousness, are the ground of this rejoicing.

9. For thou, LORD, *art* high above all the earth: thou art exalted far above all gods.

That such a God, the Great Jehovah, is high above all the earth and all the wicked thereof, is here assigned as properly *the* ground and reason of this joy. O how infinitely above the empty and powerless gods of the heathen!

10. Ye that love the LORD, hate evil: he preserveth the

souls of his saints; he delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked.

The one great moral lesson from these views of God and his throne is briefly put here: "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." As God hates all sin and wrong, so should ye. No duty can be more imperative; none more reasonable. Let the example of the great and holy God inspire in your souls most intense abhorrence of sin. He who preserves your souls and redeems you from the power of the wicked, does all in the love of righteousness and the hatred of sin; therefore let this benevolence of your God prompt and inspire you to like love of others' well-being and abhorrence of all evil.

11. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.

"Light sown"—to produce a harvest of blessings, the best of "gladness." The figure is exquisitely beautiful. Light is one of the finest possible emblems of happiness. That it should be planted as a seed, is of course a poetic conception, yet at once clear in sense and beautiful in figure, surely foretokening a future product of good for the truly righteous.

12. Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

Well indeed may all the righteous rejoice in the Lord who makes sure to them such a wealth of blessing. Let them especially rejoice as they think of his *holiness*—his abhorrence of sin; his glorious purity; his supreme devotion to the highest interests of his moral universe.

PSALM XCVIII.

It is entirely obvious that this Psalm belongs to the group which commences with Psalm 93, and (omitting perhaps Ps. 94) closes with Ps. 100. With some variety, the general strain of thought, as well as cast of expression, is remarkably similar. With great probability they were all written by the same hand and of course in the same age. I assume that the Psalms of Book IV belong to the age between Manasseh and the last carrying away of captives to Babylon, and that this special group is an outgrowth of the revival under Josiah. Such revivals of the religious life and consequently of religious worship, would naturally bring out many new songs for public use, adapted to the times.

1. O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvelous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

2. The LORD hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly showed in the sight of the heathen.

3. He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

It is, perhaps, impossible to say how far back the mind of the writer travels into the historical past. Marvelous things, wrought of God, victories won, the salvation of his people displayed before all the earth, might have been found as far back as the age of Moses and Egypt, or in the age of David and his powerful enemies, or of Hezekiah and the proud Assyrian—the latter as being nearer, with much more probability. Those wonders were the grand manifestation of God's power to save in their own age. They thrilled the soul of Isaiah, and through him the souls of the pious in his and the subsequent age. It is quite pertinent here to notice the somewhat numerous points of striking similarity between this group of Psalms and the writings of Isaiah. Is it perhaps supposable that Isaiah himself wrote them? If not, we must, I judge, concede that the writer had Isaiah before his mind, and drank in from him a measure of his sublime poetic and religious inspiration. Compare vs. 2, 3, of this Psalm, with Isa. 52: 10. "The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." The spirit of missionary zeal and enterprise which reign in these Psalms is only the spirit of Isaiah re-produced in the next generation of his readers and admirers.

4. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth; make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

5. Sing unto the LORD with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

6. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the LORD, the King.

The Hebrew word for "make a loud noise," * properly, *to break forth in loud shouts*, is characteristic of Isaiah—used by him at least seven times, and not elsewhere in this sense except once here.——The sentiment—sing the high praises of God with ever heightening appliances, with the use of all known instruments of music adapted to religious worship.

7. Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

8. Let the floods clap *their* hands: let the hills be joyful together

9. Before the LORD; for he cometh to judge the earth; with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Let all nature sympathize and swell the song—the sea and all that dwell therein, the world and all its vast populations. Then think of the floods *clapping their hands* with joy! This figure also comes from Isaiah (55: 12) who, however, applies it to the trees—"all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." The inspiring cause of this overflowing joy is that Jehovah is coming to judge the earth in righteousness and equity. Such judgments as those which crushed the proud Assyrian inspired this confidence. The words look primarily to similar manifestations of God's righteous judgment among the nations: remotely, to the final judgment of which these anterior manifestations are only the precursors and pledges.

PSALM XCIX.

Here obviously we have the same general course of thought as in the Psalms preceding, with some variations.

1. The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth *between* the cherubim; let the earth be moved.

2. The LORD *is* great in Zion; and he *is* high above all the people.

3. Let them praise thy great and terrible name; *for* it *is* holy.

"Tremble," to the extent of reverent awe.——"Sitteth on" [or between] "the cherubims," with allusion to the location of the Shechinah, the visible manifestation of God's glory directly upon the mercy-seat, *i. e.*, the lid of the ark, over which cherubic figures spread their wings. The usual mode of expression is the same as here—sitting as if enthroned amid the cherubim; literally, *the sitter of the cherubim.* (Compare 1 Sam. 4: 4, and 2 Sam. 6: 2, and 2 Kings 19: 15.)——The words have some special importance here, as showing that the ark of the covenant was still in the sanctuary, and therefore that this Psalm was not written *after* the captivity—the ark never appearing in history after the exile to Babylon.——"Let them praise thy great and fearful name," a name that should inspire profoundest reverence and awe; "for it is holy." The word "holy," affirmed of the name of God and made strongly emphatic as here and in vs. 5, 9, seems to comprehend all the divine perfections—(at least all the moral)—all that which makes Jehovah truly God, according to the original idea of the word; that which is *distinctively* divine—which sets God *apart* entirely from all his creatures, lifting him indefinitely above them in every great and good quality of character.

4. The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

5. Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; *for* he *is* holy.

In the remarkable phrase, "The king's strength loveth justice," we may supply the verb of the verse previous, thus: Let them praise the strength of the king who loves justice; or we may suppose the abstract used for the concrete—"the strength of the king" for the *strong king*, the Mighty One. It is a matter of profound joy that one so mighty loves justice and will execute it among the nations.

6. Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

7. He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance *that* he gave them.

The noblest men of their ancient history were men of prayer. They drew very near to God and God came down with most signal revelations of himself to them. The fact seems to be introduced here for the moral power of its example.

8. Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.

Insensibly the discourse passes from those distinguished men here named to the people of their generation.——"Inventions;" not at all in the modern sense—mechanical improvements—but of deeds wickedly devised by men alien from God. It is a striking fact that this Hebrew word, applied to God, bears always the good sense, but applied to man, always the bad sense of wicked devices, ways contrived in opposition to God, in defiance of his law.

9. Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God *is* holy.

Exalt Jehovah, *our* Great God: worship at the place of his appointment.

PSALM C.

Comparing the several Psalms of this group with each other, we are struck with their general similarity, yet we may also detect shades of difference. Thus Ps. 97 gives more prominence to the glorious works of God; Ps. 98 makes prominent the summons to praise because of those great works. In the same way, Ps. 99

dwells largely on what God has done; Ps. 100 simply calls on all to serve, worship, give thanks and praise. This fact evinces a designed relation between these successive Psalms—a perfectly natural and appropriate relation, moreover, for such a call to praise and thanksgiving has a natural basis in God's character and works. Nothing can be more fitting than that the call to praise should follow such a presentation of qualities that ought to be praised. God asks our love and praise, not on the basis of arbitrary power and right to command, but of his infinite merit, his intrinsic worthiness and the proofs thereof which he has given in lavish abundance.

1. Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

2. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

"Serve the Lord"—a word less frequent than we should perhaps expect. It occurs Ps. 2: 11. It calls for obedience to his revealed will—the service due from subjects to their Great King. Let it be rendered not grudgingly, not with painful resistance, but with "gladness," which certainly implies a cheerful good will, a hearty love of his service above all other life.

3. Know ye that the LORD he *is* God; *it is* he *that* hath made us, and not we ourselves; *we are* his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

This sentiment has appeared in Ps. 95: 7, and elsewhere—the high claims of God as our Creator, the fountain of our being and of all the good which existence involves.

4. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, *and* into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, *and* bless his name.

5. For the LORD *is* good; his mercy *is* everlasting; and his truth *endureth* to all generations.

The summons to praise, in public, in his earthly courts, is based most appropriately on his goodness which no human words can adequately express; on his everlasting mercy; and on his truth, *i. e.*, faithfulness to his promises, which endureth age after age in unwaning strength, always reliable; never failing.

PSALM CI.

This Psalm and also Ps. 103 are ascribed to David. Yet they stand here in Book IV. But at the close of Book II (Ps. 72: 20) the compilers said—"The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended"—a statement which would seem to imply that they supposed they had placed in the Psalter all the known Psalms of David.

Yet Book III has one Psalm ascribed to David (Ps. 86); Book IV has two; and Book V fifteen. These facts raise several questions of interest, *e. g.*, What does the subscription to Ps. 72 mean and is it reliable? In what sense are these eighteen Psalms the work of David which we find ascribed to him in Books III, IV, and V?——On this latter point some critics hold that they are David's only in the sense of being written by his royal descendants, *e. g.*, Hezekiah, Josiah, Zerubbabel. Others hold the less objectionable view that the groundwork is David's, but modified, adapted to the times, and adopted practically by some later hand. I accept this view as involving less difficulties than any other.——As to the subscription to Ps. 72 we are relieved of some difficulties when we take the ground (manifestly tenable and just) that the compilers were not necessarily inspired and their remarks need not be vindicated as if they were part of the inspired record. Furthermore, the Psalms of David found in Books I and II may include all that were thoroughly finished and prepared for the public service of the sanctuary by himself. He may have left other songs unfinished which came to light subsequently and were prepared for public use by other hands and adopted into the later books of the Psalter. Or this may have been the case: Though finished productions of David and truly inspired, they were not called for in the sanctuary service until later ages and new events made for them a fitting place and they were adopted, as said above, by some other writer as expressing his experiences, and as demanded in the public worship of his times.——Another important question closely related to these points is that of the *time* when these several books of the Psalter were compiled. Briefly stated, I have assumed that Book I. was compiled during the reign of David and probably near its close; Book II, not earlier than the reign of Jehoshaphat and probably not later than Hezekiah; Book III, in like manner, not earlier than the time of Hezekiah and probably not much later; Book IV, near the beginning of the captivity—in the time of Jeremiah; and Book V, in the age of Ezra and Nehemiah.——The time of compiling Book IV calls for more particular notice here, it being a disputed question whether it was done in the age of Jeremiah or of Ezra. I favor the earlier date on these grounds: (1) If placed in the age of Ezra, no reason is apparent for making Book V at all. Why were not all the Psalms (90–150) put into one book? By this theory they should have been compiled by the same men and near the same time: why then make them two books instead of one?

(2) Internal evidence makes it probable that the group of kindred Psalms (93–100) was written during the age of Josiah. The manifest influence of Isaiah's prophecies (probably a fresh influence) and the reference to the ark and the cherubim (Ps. 99: 1) are points in this evidence. If written then, they were probably compiled during that age.

(3) It is probable (a priori) that as the religious reformation under David brought into existence and into public use a body of religious odes; as the corresponding reformation under Jehoshaphat brought out another accession of odes, which appear in Book II; and the great revival under Hezekiah yet another which were collected into Book III; so the last great revival preceding the exile, viz., that under Josiah, should produce another, such as Book IV.

(4) These Psalms of Book IV are in every respect admirably adapted to the circumstances of that age.

In accordance with the views above presented, we may suppose this Psalm to have been left among the unfinished or at least the uncompiled Psalms of David, but taken up in the age of Jeremiah—probably by King Josiah himself and brought forward as expressing his noble purposes as to his religious life and regal responsibilities. It will be remembered that Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight years "and in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father," and in the twelfth year (then at the age of twenty) he commenced his great public reformation (2 Chron. 34: 1–3). The entire tone of this Psalm is therefore admirably adapted to his ease.

1. I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

To sing unto God of mercy and of judgment would seem to mean—I will celebrate the mercies and the judgments of the Lord; I will sing of them to his praise. But this does not naturally give the scope of this particular Psalm which is entirely occupied with his own purposes respecting his life and reign. Hence some have supposed that this v. 1. contemplates not specially the scope of this Psalm, but of Ps. 102 and 103; the former singing of judgment; the latter, of mercy. Perhaps so. If the words are to be understood of this Psalm only, it is not easy to determine to what precisely they refer.

2. I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

"O when wilt thou come unto me?" involves the prayer—Grant me fresh manifestations of favor. Come near to me to dwell with me and to aid me in maintaining the life of devoted service to thee which I now solemnly purpose.

3. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it* shall not cleave to me.

I will not allow myself to look on any wickedness lest the sight of the eye should bring temptation to my soul.——The last clause probably in this sense; I hate the doing of unrighteousness; it

shall find no sympathy in me. My heart shall not cleave to it. I hate the doing, and [by implication] the spirit of apostasy from God.

4. A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked *person.*

Not primarily—I will thrust away the men of froward heart and have no intimacy with the wicked; but I will put a froward heart away from myself; I will put frowardness, moral perverseness, from my own soul, and I will not *know* wickedness—"know" in the sense of approving sympathy. Thus understood, the verse speaks of self-culture rather than of the choice of associates and of relations to wicked men.——The last Hebrew noun, translated "wicked person," should certainly mean *wickedness itself.*

5. Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off: him that hath a high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

Here the writer passes from speaking of self-culture to speak of his treatment of the wicked. "Privily slandereth"—literally, he that *tongueth* his neighbor secretly.——"Will I not suffer," is properly, "him I *can not*"—*i. e.*, can not live with, can not bear about me, as the same verb is used Isa. 1: 13.

6. Mine eyes *shall be* upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

7. He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

I will look carefully for faithful and true men to fill responsible positions under me. Nobly said!

8. I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

"Early," *i. e., in the morning;* but the sense is—In the very beginning of my reign. Remembering that Josiah succeeded at only a two years' interval the intensely wicked reign of Manasseh, a long reign moreover of fifty-five years, it is obvious that a thinning out, not to say a general cleaning out of bad men from high official positions, would be a first necessity to such a reformation as Josiah had resolved to effect. The same necessity existed to some extent though probably to a less extent in the case of David when he came to the throne.

PSALM CII.

In the caption to this Psalm ("A prayer of the afflicted when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord") the case of the author is described but his name withheld. It is supposeable that the compiler was himself the author and for this reason suppressed his name. Or he meant to suggest that his way of relief when "overwhelmed" was good for any and every other "afflicted one," and any such one might fitly seek God for like relief.——It was hinted in the introduction to Ps. 90, that not improbably Jeremiah compiled this Book IV. The same suggestion is in place here. He may have been of this Psalm both compiler and author. His sympathy with suffering Zion, his grief, his tears, and on the other hand his hope in God and his relief from God's promises and from his love were certainly the same in kind which we have here reproduced most perfectly. How far the affliction contemplated here was personal, *e. g.*, from sickness; and how far public and religious—from sympathy with Zion in her affliction, it is impossible to determine absolutely—but the latter was present manifestly and in no inconsiderable force. It is the beauty and glory of this Psalm that this afflicted one manifests such sympathy and such identity of interest with the God of Zion that while God lives and loves, he can not lack a well-spring of joy even in the most dreary of earth's deserts. Flying to God and taking hold of his promises of good to Zion, his soul rises to grateful joy.

1. Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.

2. Hide not thy face from me in the day *when* I am in trouble: incline thine ear unto me: in the day *when* I call answer me speedily.

These are the outgoings of the Christian soul; the voice of the religious life: To whom shall I go in trouble but to my God?

3. For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as a hearth.

"Consumed like smoke"—would be better read—"pass away as *in smoke*, as if they disappeared into smoke and ashes.—— "Burned as a hearth," is not a felicitous translation, for a "hearth" should be incombustible. Better—"burned as a faggot," as any fuel. The sentiment, My days waste away to nothing; turn to no good account; are lost.

4. My heart is smitten, and withered like grass: so that I forget to eat my bread.

5. By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.

"My heart smitten," its vital forces stricken down as grass is

struck with the mower's scythe and then must wither.——"Forget to eat"—literally forget so as not to eat. No promptings of appetite call me to my accustomed food. Sorrow has taken all appetite for food away.——"By reason of the voice of my groaning"—but it is rather the grief than the outward expression of it that dries his flesh to his bones. This is a poet's delineation of intense grief.

6. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.

7. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house-top.

These birds are chosen to represent his case because they frequent old ruins, the most desolate localities; and in the night. This afflicted one is a desolate dreary mourner, sleepless and lonely.

8. Mine enemies reproach me all the day; *and* they that are mad against me are sworn against me.

The last clause better thus: My infuriated foes swear by me, *i. e.*, imprecate curses on men by saying, Let them be as miserable as he. Hebrew usage sustains this sense of swearing by another (See Isa. 65: 15 and Jer. 29: 22).

9. For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,

10. Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.

In oriental life deep mourners sat in ashes, threw ashes upon their heads, and thus ashes might come into their food. So the mourners' oft-flowing tears became mixed with his drink—all by reason of "the wrath of the Lord," probably as manifested toward the Zion he so tenderly loved. Personal sufferings from persecution or otherwise may have been involved, as in the case of Jeremiah.——"Thou hast lifted me up and cast me down" seems to imply, raising one high to give him a deeper and more dangerous fall. Instead of this, the Hebrew suggests the figure of a tempest or whirlwind by which one is caught up and hurled violently forward or *cast away.*

11. My days *are* like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

"A shadow that declineth" is literally a shadow *stretched out*, as shadows lengthen rapidly just when they are taking their flight. Wasting grief, perhaps sickness, is cutting short his days.

12. But thou, O LORD, shalt endure forever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.

"But *Thou*," in the strongest contrast with my case. And this is my comfort—nay more, my joy—that my God lives, and will live forever.——"Thy remembrance" should probably be, thy *memorial name*. Hebrew usage favors this sense. The meaning then would be that the faithfulness and love expressed in that memorial name [Jehovah] shall endure through all generations. God not only lives forever but will be forever the same faithful, loving God, the everlasting hope and joy of his trustful people.

13. Thou shalt arise, *and* have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come.

14. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favor the dust thereof.

"Shalt arise"—as if from a sitting posture he aroused himself to the most vigorous exertion of his saving power.——The important word "for" * ["*for* the time;" "*for* thy servants"] admits almost equally well of being translated "*for*" as a logical reason, and *when* with reference to time. If the latter be chosen it will of course assume the certainty of the event, and the event will bear the same logical relation to its antecedent as if the sense "for" were given it. Thus: Nothing is more certain than that God will arise for mercy to Zion *when* his appointed time shall have come, which time is in the divine plan and can not fail. So also the set time will surely have come *when* God's servants shall manifest their sympathy with her ruined stones and give themselves with all their souls to her rebuilding. God's set time will be indicated by the hearts of his people.——Let it not be overlooked that this faith in God's returning to rebuild Zion lifts the load of grief from this smitten sufferer's heart. Inspired by such faith and hope he can bear any thing; he practically knows no more any sorrow. —The logical relations of thought in the passage are also richly instructive. God will arise to restore Zion, *for* the thing is fixed in his mind; will thus arise *when* this time shall have come; and it will have come, you may know, when his servants give the love of their heart to Zion and the power of their hand to her work.—— Plainly the writer lived at a point where he saw, present, or in the near prospect, the desolation of Zion, and in the certain future, her glorious restoration. The latter referred primarily to the time of Cyrus.

15. So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

16. When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

"So"—in consequence of such manifestations of God's power and love for his Zion the heathen would be impressed with the

fear of Jehovah; the kings of the earth would see his glory.—— In v. 16 the tenses being future, seem to demand this construction: For the Lord will then have built Zion; he will have displayed his magnificent glory. That is, the time is *past* with close reference to the fear of the name of the Lord and the beholding of his glory which are the logical antecedents.

17. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

"The prayer of the destitute"—in Hebrew, the *naked* one, the most utterly destitute and helpless. When his people have this feeling and come before God in conscious want and conscious weakness, yet taking hold of his strength as their legitimate hope, God will never despise their prayer.

18. This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.

These things would be put on record for coming ages. Let all people read and know, and knowing, praise the Lord Jehovah!—— "The people which shall be created"—the people then composing the Lord's Zion, then constituting his church, shall sing Hallelujah, *i. e.*, praise the Lord. The expression seems to be parallel to Ps. 22: 31: "They shall declare his righteousness *unto a people* that shall be born," *i. e.*, to a future generation. There is no adequate authority in Hebrew usage for assuming a special reference to the new birth.

19. For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;

20. To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;

21. To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;

22. When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

"For"—the logical reason—"he [the Lord] hath bent himself over [Hebrew] from his holy height—yea, from heaven hath the Lord looked down to earth"—for what? Not to pay his respects to earth's great men or its dazzling glories, but to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose the bands of the sons of death, *i. e.*, those foredoomed to die, on the verge of death, ["the soul that sinneth shall die"]; to declare the name of Jehovah in Zion [*i. e.*, to manifest what the name Jehovah implies], and to set forth in Jerusalem his praise-worthy qualities and deeds, when the nations shall be assembled there and the kingdoms to serve the Lord. The last named point assumes that this event—the gathering of all the nations to Zion to learn of God and to worship him, is already foreshown—a thing of prophecy and of faith. Isaiah and Micah, not to name others, had foretold it in essentially these same words

23. He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.

24. I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years *are* throughout all generations.

By a very sudden transition of thought the writer recurs again to his sad experiences as in vs. 3–11.——"He breaketh down my strength in the way," *i. e.*, in the course of his providential leadings: "he cuts short my days"—said probably with reference to the severity of his trials and labors, or possibly persecutions. Jeremiah might have said this with special pertinence.——"Take me not away" is more exactly, Take me not *up*, with possible reference to the case of Elijah, "taken up."——"In the midst," literally, in the half of my days; when they are but half numbered. ——"Thy years run through all generations." But what is the relation of thought between the preceding words and these? Is it—Why shouldest thou not give thy servants more days on earth when thy years stretch on so far? Or is it rather this: Short though my days may be, yet my God *lives on* with never waning strength and no end of his years. Let this be my joy—that his thoughts of love will endure and he will never lack the power to fulfill them. The following context and the entire scope of the Psalm favor the latter view.

25. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens *are* the work of thy hands.

26. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

27. But thou *art* the same, and thy years shall have no end.

"Of old"—more literally, *aforetime*, said of what is *before*, but here certainly with reference to time. I understand the passage to allude tacitly to those striking words which solemnly affirm that God's covenant with his people shall outlast the heavens, be more sure than the ordinances of the sun and the moon in the sky. In Jer. 31: 35–37, on this wise: "Thus saith the Lord who giveth the sun for a light by day and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, the Lord of Hosts is his name; If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever," etc. Also Jer. 33: 20–22. The fact that the known writings of Jeremiah use this illustration so familiarly may be allowed to favor the theory that he is the author of this Psalm.——The sentiment is grand. Human life is too short for man to form and execute great plans; for how often is his strength cut off in the midst of his work? But God's years roll on forever. The sun and the stars will fade out, but his strength remains unwasted for evermore!——"Thou art the same,"

literally, Thou art *he*—an expressive affirmation of God's changeless being;—for evermore thou art *He*—all there is in God remaining forever the same.——It is remarkable that the writer to the Hebrews (1 : 10–12) assumes that this passage ascribes Creatorship to the Son of God. This obviously implies that God as revealed to his people under the name Jehovah, the great "*I am*," was really the eternal Son.

28. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

God's servants individually may be cut short of life and die; but their generations shall endure; their children shall rise up to fill their places, and then their children's children, so that God's covenant shall stand and the seed of the righteous be established before God. So the church has a sort of earthly immortality: God's earthly kingdom shall not end while the world shall stand. Let this be the consolation of any and every "afflicted one" "when he is overwhelmed and poureth out his complaint before the Lord."

PSALM CIII.

This sweet Psalm, so richly expressive of grateful homage to the Glorious Giver of all good, supplying through all the ages since it was written the choicest words for the noblest sentiments and affections toward God—is briefly ascribed to David. As to the precise sense in which it is David's, the reader will please recur to the remarks introductory to Ps. 101.——The first and central thought—"Bless the Lord, O my soul"—is justified and enforced by a recital of individual, personal, mercies (vs. 3–5); by a broader view of his mercies to the specially needy and to his covenant people (vs. 6, 7); by a view of his intrinsic character as a God of mercy (vs. 8, 9); as manifested toward all his penitent children (vs. 10–14; for which there is manifold occasion in the fact of human frailty (vs. 15, 16). This mercy is most enduring (vs. 17, 18); issuing forth from a throne forever fixed and supreme (v. 19)—which supremacy embraces the angelic hosts and calls upon them for adoring homage (vs. 20, 21); and finally in like manner upon *all his* works—beings and things—every-where in his universe; and last, upon the writer's own soul (v. 22).

1. Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name.

"Bless" as here, is scarcely distinguishable from praise. It makes prominent the thought of giving honor and glory to God; it may include wishing him joy in the exercise of his mercy and rejoicing personally in his infinite happiness.——"All that is within me"—all my noblest powers—my voice, my song, my

grateful emotions, the love of my heart, my willing spirit and obedient life.

2. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

3. Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

4. Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;

5. Who satisfieth thy mouth with good *things; so that* thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.

These verses enumerate personal blessings from God. Most fitly the first is forgiveness of sin. Who does not feel that this blessing towers high above all others possible to sinners?—— Restoration from sickness has appropriately the next place.—— In v. 5, the translation "mouth" has no support from Hebrew usage. The word used * means elsewhere *ornament, adornment.* Here, apparently, our highest glory as beings—that which gives us our distinguished pre-eminence among the lower orders of creatures, and well translated *soul*, in the same way in which the usual Hebrew word for glory sometimes means soul [*e. g.*, Ps. 16: 9]. Satisfying the soul with good, renews one's youth like the eagle's. A happy heart doeth good like a medicine. It becomes a good, not to the soul only, but through sympathy, to the body as well.

6. The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

Rising from personal blessings to general, the comprehensive fact, evermore to the glory of God, is his sympathy with the suffering and oppressed, and his ready and effective interposition in their case. Who will not praise him that he careth so kindly and so gloriously for those who suffer cruel wrongs from wicked oppressors?

7. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

These "ways" made known to Moses and his people Israel, were specimen cases under the general fact just mentioned—"righteousness and judgment for all the oppressed."

8. The LORD *is* merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

9. He will not always chide: neither will he keep *his anger* forever.

"Jehovah merciful and gracious," as he announced his immortal name to Moses (recorded Ex. 34: 5–7). Moses had said: "I be-

seech thee, show me thy glory;" and God replied: "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee." To that wonderfully comprehensive and descriptive name the Psalmist here refers: "Merciful and gracious."

10. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

11. For as the heaven is high above the earth, *so* great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

12. As far as the east is from the west, *so* far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

His retribution for our sins has fallen far below our deserts. Probation is itself merciful and involves immense long-suffering, and the glorious possibility on every sinner's part of turning back to God, and in this event, the certainty of forgiveness. The height of the heavens above the earth helps us to conceive the greatness of this mercy toward those who humbly fear him. Beautifully the Hebrew has it: As God has put the east far away from the west, so hath he put our sins far away from us—to be remembered no more against us! The pardon he giveth is pardon indeed. Your sins and your iniquities shall be not even remembered any more. He says the same thing strongly through Micah (Mic. 7: 18, 19).

13. Like as a father pitieth *his* children, *so* the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

14. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we *are* dust.

This illustration comes home to human bosoms, or rather, is drawn from the impulses and the love of human souls. As the human father has a warm heart [Hebrew] toward his children, so has the Lord toward those that fear him—his filial, obedient, children. For he knows our *make*—our constitution and its inherent frailties and weaknesses; he remembers that these bodies were made of dust; subject, therefore, to temptation, pain, and death.

15. *As for* man, his days *are* as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

16. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

"As for *man*," very frail is he, as the word chosen here for man implies. He is compared to the grass whose natural life is only a few months at longest. As the blossom flowers, so he blossoms for his brief day, the Hebrew beautifully using the same word for the field-blossom and for the man, blossoming.——For a

breath of air, a gentle wind * passes over him and he is gone. It would not be so strange if a tempest, a whirlwind, passing over should sweep him away. The Psalmist means much more than this. The gentlest touch, the whispering breeze, bears him off. He soon becomes a stranger, no more known in the little space he once filled, going out and coming in.

17. But the mercy of the LORD *is* from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

18. To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Over against the briefness of man's life and the transientness of all his doings stand the enduring mercy of the Lord and his perpetual remembrance of his covenant people. O how unlike to man's few days are his immortal years! How much more enduring his love and sure his promised blessings than any good guaranteed to us only by frail, short-lived man!

19. The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

It is ground for the purest joy that God's throne is fixed too high to be endangered by his petty, puny foes—too exalted to be obscured by their malicious endeavors. His kingdom embraces all that live, excepting none.

20. Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

21. Bless *ye* the LORD, all *ye* his hosts; *ye* ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

These few words descriptive of the angels are by no means exhaustive. Yet the points given are of the first importance; "mighty in strength," *i. e.*, of most exalted powers and capabilities: And evermore obedient to the mandates of the Most High, diligently hearkening to catch every word from his lips and evermore swift to execute it. Upon all these noblest of created beings the Psalmist calls to bless the Lord Jehovah.

22. Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

The last specification is completely comprehensive; all his works in all places of his wide dominions"—all that he has made, whether intelligent or not intelligent; "in all places"—above, beneath, around: in heaven, earth, or hell: let them all fall into this universal chorus of praise and blessing, extolling Jehovah, the

One supremely great, supremely good!——Nor will he exempt himself; for his personal responsibilities as to his own heart are his highest. Therefore he closes as he began, "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

PSALM CIV.

This Psalm stands without caption. In subject it bears close relations to Ps. 103—a circumstance strongly in favor of referring it to the same author. It enlarges the glorious theme of *praise to God* by setting forth his wonderful works in the material world. It is *God in nature*, yet not at all in the pantheistic sense—*nature itself a part of God;* but in the far nobler sense, a personal God, the Infinite Creator of all material things, for evermore energizing by his present hand to sustain the forces which supply from the material world the wants of all the living. Remarkably the course of thought follows somewhat definitely the order of topics presented in the original account of the creation given [Gen. 1] by Moses: God the glorious Creator; investing himself with light; stretching out the broad expanse of the visible heavens; locating the waters that belong above the firmament; the clouds also and the winds; fixing the solid earth and gathering together the waters appropriated to its surface and thus providing for the springs and rivers that supply animal want and insure the fruits of the earth. Thus the author's mind ranges on, as of one whose open eye has traced out the marvelous ways of God in blessing all his vast family of living creatures—themes on which it is sweet to dwell, and which call forth from his grateful, adoring soul praises ever fresh to the great Father of all.

1. Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honor and majesty:
2. Who coverest *thyself* with light as *with* a garment; who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:
3. Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters; who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

"Thou art very great"—the comprehensive fact which the whole Psalm expands and illustrates.——"Coverest thyself with light" is put sublimely by Paul (1 Tim. 6: 16): "Dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto."——"Stretching out the heavens like a curtain," of course contemplates the heavens as visible to us—the expanse above us in which we see the heavenly bodies.——"Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters," follows the ancient Hebrew conception which indeed appears in Gen. 1, that God divided the waters of our globe into two parts, storing one part above the supposed solid firmament, and

the other in the oceans and seas of our earth. In the former he laid the beams of his upper chambers, those grand apartments of the universe which are his own special abode. It is of no importance for us to inquire whether this poetical conception is true to fact and nature. The Scriptures were not designed to teach us celestial geography in a scientific way.——The phenomena of rain seemed to the ancients to imply a store-house of waters above, and therefore their poetic imaginations assumed it. So far as divine revelation is concerned, the Lord let it pass, waving that whole subject in order to teach us more important things. ——"The clouds his chariot," and the thunder the roar of its wheels.——"Walking upon the wings"—but the incongruity of walking on wings is not to be charged upon the Hebrew author, who said only—*moving, traversing* the regions of space on the wings of wind.

4. Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

This verse demands patient attention.

(1) Some maintain that the *angels* of Scripture, the intelligent beings appearing so often in sacred history, are not here at all. They translate—"Who maketh the winds his messengers; the lightnings his ministers; *i. e*, who uses both the winds and the lightnings as his servants. Against this construction lie the constant usage of the Hebrew word to signify an order of intelligent beings, and the authority of the writer to the Hebrews who quotes the passage (Heb. 1: 7) in an argument which assumes that the word refers to beings of intelligence.

(2) A few critics have explained the passage, Who maketh his angels *incorporeal*—pure spirits, made out of wind as best representing the invisible nature of spirits. Also "his ministers"—a parallel expression—out of fire, lightning. But this construction scarcely deserves serious refutation. It is entirely foreign to the scope of the Psalm which treats of the *material works* of God; the sense it brings out conflicts with the constant representation of the Scriptures, in which angels continually appear clad in material forms. Yet of the nature of these material bodies it were vain for us to speculate further than to say—They are *not* brought before us as incorporeal, *i. e.*, as purely spiritual beings.

(3) A third construction has found much favor among critics, thus: "Who maketh his angels *as* or *like* the winds, and as the lightnings—swift in motion, mighty in power." The main objection to this is, it seems to be aside from the scope of the Psalm.

(4) A fourth construction has the voice of a large part of the best modern critics. It may be expressed thus: "Who employs his angels *upon* the winds; his messengers upon the lightnings, *i. e.*, who works the tempest and the lightning at his pleasure by the agency of his angels.——The grandeur of this conception is in striking harmony with the scope of the sublime things before the poet's mind. Its thought moreover is germain to the theme of

the Psalm—God's ways and workings in the material world. Nor can there be any doubt that this sentiment is in accordance with truth, at least in regard to whatever supernatural agencies God may employ through tempest and storm.——On this remarkable passage the reader may be interested to see the views of various critics.—Gesenius on the word "angel:" "By their agency are wrought the phenomena of nature"—citing as a case this passage. Fuerst, also on the word as in the passage: "He" [the angel] "appears as tempest or lightning." Rev. Alfred Barry, in Smith's Bible Dictionary: "The operations of nature are spoken of as under angelic guidance, fulfilling the will of God." Not only is this the case in poetical passages such as Ps. 104: 4 (commented on in Heb. 1: 7), but in the simplest prosaic history, *e. g.*, Ex. 12: 23 and Heb. 11: 28. Stuart (Apoc. II: 400): "It seems probable that the passage [Ps. 104: 4 and Heb. 1: 7] is to be explained in reference to the views of the Jews as connected with the subject of guardian angels over the elements."—Olshausen [on Heb. 1: 7]: "Scripturally the angels are powers of God, *i. e.*, personal creatures, furnished with peculiar powers, through whom God works wonders in the kingdom of nature, and whom he accordingly makes to be storm-winds and flames of fire in as far as he lets them, so to speak, incorporate themselves with these elements and operations of nature."——It only remains to say that in this view of its meaning, the passage is beautifully appropriate to the argument of the writer to the Hebrews. The angels are exalted in dignity, great in strength, grand in their working, but yet are far below the Son of God.

5. *Who* laid the foundations of the earth, *that* it should not be removed forever.

The firmness of the earth's deep foundations was a favorite and precious thought in the Hebrew mind. Yet how much is the grandeur of our conceptions enhanced when we come to understand (as they did not) that the simple law of gravitation holds the earth in its orbit and all the matter of our globe to its place!

6. Thou coveredst it with the deep as *with* a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.

7. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.

8. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

9. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

Exegetically, the question here is whether the passage refers to the era of the creation or to that of the deluge in the age of Noah. Inasmuch as the chaotic state (Gen. 1: 2) involved essentially a deluge—a submergence of the earth under water, the phenomena in the two cases—the primeval chaos and the deluge of Noah

must have been quite similar. Most of the points made in these verses were fulfilled in both. The last point made in v. 9 is an exception to this remark, since it refers manifestly to the deluge of Noah and is inapplicable to the primeval chaos: "that they turn not again to cover the earth."——v. 8 were better read: "They ascend or climb the mountains: they flow back into the valleys," etc.

10. He sendeth the springs into the valleys, *which* run among the hills.

11. They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.

The beautiful provision of mountain reservoirs which feed the springs, which again feed the rivers that flow in the valleys, is ascribed to God's hand which "sendeth them forth."

12. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, *which* sing among the branches

13. He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

"By them," *i. e.*, by the side of these water-courses; for the beauties of the river system are not complete without trees on their banks and singing birds in the trees.——The hills are watered from God's "chambers," the same word as in v. 3. The palaces of God, his upper halls above the sky, are thought to rest upon the superincumbent mass of waters above the firmament—the great reservoir for our earth.——The earth is satisfied, *i. e.*, sated, amply supplied with water and all things necessary to fertility.

14. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;

15. And wine *that* maketh glad the heart of man, *and* oil to make *his* face to shine, and bread *which* strengtheneth man's heart.

"Herb for the *service* of man," should rather be, the herb for the *culture* of man, for him to cultivate for his subsistence.——The allusion to "oil" does not class it as one of these products of the earth, but makes it a figure of comparison, thus: "And wine that gladdens man's heart to make his face shine more than oil." The English margin suggests this; the Hebrew demands it.

16. The trees of the LORD are full *of sap;* the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;

17. Where the birds make their nests; *as for* the stork, the fir trees *are* her house.

18. The high hills *are* a refuge for the wild goats; *and* the rocks for the conies.

The Lord's trees are the noblest, grandest of all, as "the mountains of God" are the loftiest. The special reference here is to the cedars of Lebanon, first in grandeur among trees known to the Hebrew people.——Not specifically "full *of sap*," but according to the scope of the context, supplied with moisture, and therefore kept in vigorous growth.——"The conies," an animal resembling the rabbit, yet unknown in America. All that is important here is that the rocky districts were its home, God having utilized the whole face of the earth by giving existence to animals adapted to all varieties of soil, climate, condition.

19. He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

20. Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep *forth.*

21. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

22. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

"The moon for seasons," *i. e.*, for set times, the Hebrew months being lunar and their festivals being fixed by the changes of the moon.——"Beasts of the forest creep forth," not stealthily, but as those who are in their place and on their own time. God made them for night work.——"Seek their food from God"—not by asking in prayer, but in the way of seeking by instinct what his careful bounty has provided. The Psalmist purposely honors God as the Great Provider for even the powerful lion.

23. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening.

As the wild animals improve the night to get their food, man uses the day for his labor. God's plan avoids their interference with each other.

24. O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

The natural and appropriate reflection from such a survey of God's works in the material world and in his general providence. What wisdom shines forth in all these wonderful adaptations of earth to man and beast! The earth so amply furnished with all most needful things reminds the Psalmist of some wealthy man's establishment, supplied with all that industry and wealth can provide.

25. *So is* this great and wide sea, wherein *are* things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

26. There go the ships: *there is* that leviathan, *whom* thou hast made to play therein.

27. These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give *them* their meat in due season.

28. *That* thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

29. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

From a survey of the dry land, valley, mountain, he passes to the great and wide sea where the ships travel; where the huge, sea-serpent sports, and where countless families of fish are fed wonderfully from God's hand. Is there a greater marvel than lies in the question—Where is their pasture-ground? What food does their Great Maker provide for such countless and almost infinitely various forms, tastes, and wants?

30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

Does this passage throw light on the question of new creations? In my view, not necessarily, for this may be only the general fact that all the creatures contemplated in this Psalm owe their existence to God's original creative fiat. "Renewest the face of the earth" may be an allusion to its re-peopling after the deluge of Noah.

31. The glory of the LORD shall endure forever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works.

32. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

"The glory of the Lord" as the Great Creator and Father of all; *i. e.*, the manifestations of his wisdom, power, and love as thus made "shall endure forever," evermore a perpetual study and joy to his intelligent creatures, evermore a fountain of blessedness to himself.——With what glorious majesty and power his very *look* makes the earth tremble; he has only to "touch the hills and they smoke," a beautiful allusion, it would seem, to the phenomena of volcanoes.

33. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

34. My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.

Enchanted with his theme, the author avows his purpose to make it his study and the theme of his praise-song through all his life—even through his eternal existence. O, will he not enjoy it! Will not this study of the Great God in his works be "sweet" and his soul as he dwells on it be made "glad in the Lord?"——

The reader will note that this is one aspect of the work and joy of the heavenly world.

35. Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

What is the connection of thought between this closing verse and the rest of the Psalm? It does not lie on the surface but beneath it. When we come fully into sympathy with the writer, impressed as he was with the glory of God in all his works, with his goodness, his love, his parental care of every living thing, we shall begin to understand why he should cry out—O, those enemies of such a God—those rebels against their glorious and loving Father! Let them be consumed from the face of the earth; let them be no more! As for me, my whole being cries out; "Bless the Lord, O my soul!" O all ye people, praise the Lord!

PSALM CV.

This Psalm is only a variation upon the general theme of the two that precede it—the grounds of praise and thanksgiving to God for his mercies. Whereas Ps. 104 expatiates upon the works of God in the material world, its creation and its agencies; this Psalm gives a corresponding view of *God's hand in history*——his ways with his covenant people from the promise of Canaan to Abraham and the patriarchs to its fulfilment under Joshua in locating the tribes safely in that land of promise.

This Psalm traverses somewhat the same ground with Ps. 78, with however these two points of difference: (*a*) that whereas that Psalm passes repeatedly from God's mercies to the people's sins, this restricts itself to the ways of his mercy, reserving the provocations and rebellions of the people to Ps. 106: (*b*) that whereas in Ps. 78 the ultimate purpose of the writer was to affirm and justify God's choice of Judah before Ephraim as the tribe from which to take the royal family and within which to locate his sanctuary, the writer's purpose here is rather in general to give the grounds of praise, adoration and thanksgiving to the God of their nation's covenant, and in particular to inspire hope in God for deliverance from the national calamities then present or impending.——It should be noted that vs. 1–15 of this Psalm appear nearly in the same words in I Chron. 16; 8–22; there ascribed to David. The case shows how later authors made free use of the earlier writings of inspired men, especially of David.

1. O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.

2. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

3. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

4. Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.

"Call upon his name" is precisely, call him *by his name; i. e.*, make use of those significant names which especially reveal his relations to his chosen people, *e. g.*, Jehovah; and set forth the appropriateness of this name by showing his faithfulness to his ancient promises.——"Make known his deeds among the people"—but this being plural means, the *peoples*, the Gentile nations. This point is too important to be obscured by a defective translation.——"Seek the Lord and his strength"—seek him *as the God of strength;* seek of him the help which his strong arm is mighty to give.

5. Remember his marvelous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth:

6. O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.

"Marvelous works," "wonders"—are his miracles, supernatural interpositions of power in the history of our nation. "The judgments of his mouth"—the laws and ordinances spoken from his lips, including also sentences of judgment upon his enemies, *e. g.*, on oppressive Egypt and the corrupt, idolatrous nations of ancient Canaan.

7. He *is* the LORD our God: his judgments *are* in all the earth.

While he is pre-eminently *our* God, his judgments are upon other nations also; his rule is over all the earth. Therefore let Gentiles as well as Jews give ear to my song. These facts of history have lessons for the wide world.

8. He hath remembered his covenant forever, the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations:

9. Which *covenant* he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac:

10. And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, *and* to Israel *for* an everlasting covenant:

11. Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:

12. When they were *but* a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

God's covenant with the children of Israel was made when the nation was in *one man*, Abraham. All the more striking and re-

markable therefore was the fact that God *remembered* that covenant; continued from time to time to renew it with his posterity, and never forgat it. In due time that posterity, having grown into a great nation, were planted in the land of promise.

13. When they went from one nation to another, from *one* kingdom to another people;

14. He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;

15. *Saying,* Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

"From one kindom to another people," which seems to recognize Egypt as a kingdom. The Arab tribes and the petty sovereignties of Canaan were only *peoples.*——"The reproving of kings" looks toward the case of Pharaoh of Egypt (as in Gen. 12; 10–20), and of Abimelech of Gerar (Gen. 20: 1–18). Abraham was the "prophet" specially in view. (See Gen. 20: 7.)

16. Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.

17. He sent a man before them, *even* Joseph, *who* was sold for a servant;

18. Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:

19. Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

A famine upon the land of Canaan was God's agency to drive Jacob's sons and ultimately himself and household into Egypt. But forethoughtful provision was made for them by sending Joseph there beforehand. Joseph himself so understood the purpose of God. (Gen. 45: 5).——The translation—"he was laid in iron" quite avoids the literal form of the Hebrew which is—"His soul came into the iron," *i. e.,* the iron fetters, meaning that his nerves, his keenest sensibilities, were galled by the fetters of a slave and the bands of a prisoner.——In v. 19. "His" [Joseph's] "*word,*" and "the *word* of the Lord" are not the same term in Hebrew. The sense seems to be that until Joseph's *word* [as an interpreter of dreams] "came" to pass, "the word of the Lord," giving him those interpretations, tried him greatly; perhaps because on the one hand it indicated the divine favor to him, while yet, on the other, the long delay of two full years (Gen. 41: 1) between the fulfilling of the first interpretations [those of the butler and baker], and his deliverance from prison must have put his faith to the sternest test. See the whole history in Gen. 40 and 41.

20. The king sent and loosed him; *even* the ruler of the people, and let him go free.

21. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance:

22. To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

In the unfolding of God's plan it came to view that his purpose was to bring Joseph before Pharaoh and make him virtually lord of all Egypt. So the dark providences of God are wont to be revealed in due time into glorious light. Is it not well and safe to trust him?

23. Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

24. And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies.

The history makes special mention (Ex. 1: 7) of the rapid, extraordinary increase of the Hebrew people while in Egypt. Fear of their numbers instigated the Egyptians both to impose severe tasks and to plot the murder of their male infants (Ex. 1: 1–16).

25. He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilely with his servants.

"He turned their heart to hate his people," yet not necessarily by any such direct agency as that which turns men's hearts from sin to holiness; but by permitting such events to occur and to occur in such relations as produced in their proud, selfish, ambitious souls this hatred of the Hebrew people and this cruelty toward them. The actual processes under which Pharaoh's heart was hardened, as shown in the history, are a sufficient comment on the nature of that divine agency to which the hardening of his heart is more than once ascribed.

26. He sent Moses his servant; *and* Aaron whom he had chosen.

27. They showed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.

"Sent Moses *to be* his servant"—to act in this capacity.—— "They showed his signs," *i. e.*, they performed miracles as commissioned and directed of God, and did it in the presence of the king and his people.

28. He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.

The precise sense of this verse is not altogether obvious. Is this "darkness" the ninth plague, or does it represent in general the whole body of plagues on Egypt? And *who* are they that "did not rebel against his word?" If the Egyptians, then how does this comport with the historical fact that they did "rebel" repeatedly?—The Egyptians must be the parties spoken of as "not

rebelling."——Against the supposition that this "darkness" was the ninth special plague stands the fact that it was not this plague but the death of all their first-born which ultimately broke them down. I prefer therefore to interpret darkness here in its general sense of calamity, and the passage as comprehensively affirming that God sent on them terrible calamities *until* they no longer rebelled against his word, but succumbed. God sent darkness in the sense of plague after plague till the Egyptians rebelled no longer. Having said this in general, the Psalmist proceeds to the details.

29. He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.

30. Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.

31. He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, *and* lice in all their coasts.

These plagues on Egypt, (1) Water becoming blood; (2) Frogs; (3) Flies; (4) Lice—are in essentially the same historical order as in Moses (Ex. 7: 20, 21 and 8: 6, 17, 21). The striking point in the narration here is that the miraculous power is attributed to the divine *word*: "He *spake*, and flies came, and lice in all their coasts." So in the original creation: "he spake and it was."

32. He gave them hail for rain, *and* flaming fire in their land.

33. He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.

34. He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.

35. And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.

"He made their rain hail" [Hebrew]—all the more terrible in Egypt from the fact that even rain is so very unusual there. The "flaming fire" was lightning—most terrific in Egypt.—— In this as in the case of the lice and the flies, God *spake* and the locusts came. The poetic conception makes them the army of the Lord, moving in mighty phalanx at his word of command. The reader will note that this way of representing the miraculous agency in these plagues is used only of *animals*, who move obedient to the voice of God.

36. He smote also all the first-born in their land, the chief of all their strength.

"The chief of all their strength" is quite in harmony with the Hebrew idea of the first-born, as may be seen in Jacob's words of his Reuben [Gen. 49: 3], and in the Mosaic statutes [Deut. 21: 17], in both which passages, however, the word here translated "chief" is translated "beginning."——This death-scene was the

unendurable plague which broke the spirit of both people and king.

37. He brought them forth also with silver and gold; and *there was* not one feeble *person* among their tribes.

It was of the Lord's justice that these bondmen were not allowed to go forth empty-handed. He directed them to borrow [the Hebrew is simply *ask*] of the Egyptians. The last plague made them willing to lend or give. It was but moderate wages for their life-long services [Ex. 11: 2 and 12: 35, 36].——"Not one halting, tottering one in their tribes"—unable to march. The fact is extraordinary, indicating either miracle, or an unprecedented vigor pervading the whole nation. Supernatural agency should not be assumed where natural agencies suffice, as here. The history of slavery in our own country shows that severe toil and hard bondage are not incompatible with physical vigor.

38. Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.

"Was glad," for the death of the first-born in every house was fearfully suggestive of what might come next. "We be all dead men" [Ex. 12: 33].

39. He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.

Rapidly the poet now touches the salient points of their history; here, the wonderful pillar which was cloud by day and fire by night, the visible manifestation of God's presence, guiding them through all that pathless wilderness [Ex. 13: 21, 22].

40. *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.

41. He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like* a river.

The cases of the quails, the manna, and the smitten rock and its gushing floods of water, are touched only in the briefest manner. See the more full notice in the history [Ex. 16: 12–35 and in Ps 78: 18–29]. In this passage the quantity of water is shown to have been great.

42. For he remembered his holy promise, *and* Abraham his servant.

43. And he brought forth his people with joy *and* his chosen with gladness:

44. And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labor of the people;

45. That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD

The conclusion of this song gives us its animus and purpose, viz., to illustrate God's faithfulness in promise, and to inspire hope and confidence in him for similar faithfulness in the present and in the future. This God of the ancient promises and of these wonderful achievements in fulfilling them, *is our God forever and ever*: Praise him, all ye people!

PSALM CVI.

This Psalm belongs to the same family with the three that next precede it, with specially close relations to its nearest one, Ps. 105. Whereas that recites and reviews the divine mercies to Israel from Abraham to the possession of Canaan, this is mainly occupied with the recital of their ingratitude, rebellion, and idolatry—a dark, humiliating catalogue! The moral aim of this showing is sufficiently apparent, viz., to humble the nation, bring them to repentance, and encourage them to cry unto God for his pardoning mercy and gracious help in their then present emergencies. The prayer at the close (v. 47), "Save us," "gather us from among the heathen," plainly implies that the Psalm was written at some point, early or late, and probably early, during the exile in Babylon. During that period the Lord's prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, were inspired with earnest words and powerful appeals to the people, designed to secure the very ends contemplated in this Psalm—national humiliation, repentance, and prayerful hope in God's faithfulness and mercy. Dan. 9 may be laid beside this Psalm for comparison. The name of the author of these Psalms (104–106) is not given and can not be ascertained.

1. Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

2. Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? *who* can show forth all his praise?

"Who can utter," "show forth" "all his praise?" seems to be a concluding inference from the three Psalms immediately preceding this. The writer would say: We have been taking an inventory of the mercies of God toward our world and especially our nation, but who can enumerate them all? We are lost in the countless multitude; the footing can never be made up; the count surpasses all numerical computation. Who has ever put himself to the work and did not quickly reach the same conviction:

> "When all thy mercies, O my God,
> My rising soul surveys;
> Transported with the view, I'm lost
> In wonder, love and praise."

3. Blessed *are* they that keep judgment, *and* he that doeth righteousness at all times.

The relation of thought between this verse and those that precede it would seem to be this: In view of all this unmeasured goodness and wealth of proffered mercy, how blessed must it be to have this God for our Friend; to be at one with him as the moral King of the universe! Such is the case of those who "keep judgment," always executing justice, always acting in the fear of the Lord and in true obedience to his law.

4. Remember me, O LORD, with the favor *that thou bearest unto* thy people: O visit me with thy salvation;

5. That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

The lot of God's obedient people must be most blessed; let me never miss but always enjoy it! Let others pant for gold or fame, length of days and fullness of all earthly good:—it shall suffice me to have the lot of thy people; to see their blessedness and be gladdened with their joy!——Considered as a preface to this Psalm, the tone of these remarks has this significance and bearing:—The wealth of blessing God gives his people being so great, how sad it must be to miss it by means of sin! How tenderly earnest is the appeal to a sinning people to consider their ways; to measure their infinite loss; and be moved to the depth of their souls toward repentance and supplication for pardoning mercy!

6. We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

A sudden transition here brings him face to face with the main theme of this Psalm—the sins of the people.——"We have sinned *with* our fathers; we as well as they; we in much the same manner as they. And since they suffered fearful chastisements for their sin, so are we destined to like suffering. As they oftentimes found mercy by crying mightily to God in their distresses, so [hopefully] may we also.——Of the three verbs in this verse, meaning in general *to sin*, the first means primarily to miss the mark, to come short of the proper aim of duty; the second suggests moral perverseness; the third, outbreaking, outrageous wickedness—the climax of sin.

7. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked *him* at the sea, *even* at the Red sea.

"Understood not thy wonders." But it can not possibly be true that the Hebrews in bondage did not hear of the plagues on Egypt; did not know that themselves were set free and led out through the dry bed of the Red sea; did not *understand* that God's miraculous power wrought these wonders. But it *was* true that they *acted* afterward as if they "understood not." The truth they

knew, they did not duly realize; would not let it have its due place and power on their hearts or in their lives. They held back the truth through unrighteousness [Rom. 1: 18]. A heart minding the flesh and lusting for worldly good blinded their minds, so that practically it was as if they "understood not." For the same cause they "*remembered not* the multitude of his mercies." It became easy and natural (alas!) to forget!——These are most vital facts pertaining to what we may call the mental laws of human sinning—the power which a sin-loving heart has to counteract whatever truth concerning God and duty men may know, and to make it as if they knew and understood it not.

8. Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.

Say not (implies the Psalmist) that I overstate their sin or understate their righteousness, and that God's saving them proves this: for he saved them, not for their righteousness' sake, but of his great mercy, for the honor of his name, and to make his great power known. The Lord of their covenant was committed before the nations as their protector; salvation for the world was (instrumentally) locked up in their national life; hence the Lord had reasons, apart from their righteousness, for interposing to save their nation from extinction.

9. He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

10. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated *them*, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

11. And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.

"He rebuked," with his word of command.——"Led them through the depths"—the deep bed of the sea as if it were over the dry sands of the desert.——"Not one of them left." The history also affirms that this destruction was universal: "There remained not so much as one of them." "The sea returned to his strength:" they fled before it—but all in vain! God's awful hand was there!

12. Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.

13. They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel:

14. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.

15. And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

Then the people believed God's word, and let it be suggested, must have, for the moment, "understood his wonders on Egypt."

But (v. 13) "they *made haste* to forget his works," as the expressive Hebrew has it. Their lusts are charged with the responsibility of this great sin. More strictly, it was their lustful heart—themselves indulging their lusts.——"Waited not for his counsel"—where the waiting refers not to time but to trust. It was not so much that they would not *delay* till God moved as that they would not wait on him in prayerful trust, asking for what they might really need, committing their case to his wise counsel. The Hebrew words demand this sense.——He sent them quails in plenty to eat, but sent leanness into their souls. They filled their bodies fatally full: God made their souls fatally lean. The words and figures aim to give the statement the force of contrast. It was a terrible rebuke to unbridled lust when coupled, as it is wont to be, with recklessness of God's authority and unbelief in his care.

16. They envied Moses also in the camp, *and* Aaron the saint of the LORD.

17. The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.

18. And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.

Num. 16, gives in detail the sad but instructive history referred to here.

19. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshiped the molten image.

20. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

The people had become familiar in Egypt with the worship of the calf, ox, cow. Hence when in their impatience they thought their leader Moses had failed them, they strangely ignored the God who had miraculously saved them, and lapsed into the idol-worship of their late oppressors. The senseless, revolting wickedness of this is forcibly and tersely set forth; "Thus they changed their glory"—the glorious God of their fathers and of their national salvation—"into something resembling a grass-eating ox!" Think of it—what a change from the former to the latter! What infinite absurdities they must have swallowed before they could attempt such a change, such a substitution!

21. They forgat God their savior, which had done great things in Egypt;

22. Wondrous works in the land of Ham, *and* terrible things by the Red sea.

23. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy *them.*

Before they could do this, they must have strangely forgotten God their Savior. How accurately the sacred writer touches the mental process of sinning! They forgat God. They remembered not his merciful salvation. Their passion for sin ruled out of their thought the very things they should have thought of.——The Lord was so grieved, so offended, so discouraged (shall we say?) with this manifestation of ingratitude, forgetfulness, unbelief, that he said he would destroy the whole nation, and would have done so had not Moses "stood before him in the breach." The historic record (Ex. 32) gives a wonderful illustration of intercessory prayer.

24. Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word:

25. But murmured in their tents, *and* hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.

26. Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:

The case of the spies (found historically Num. 13 and 14) is touched briefly here. The conduct of the ten spies and of the masses of the people involved two flagrant sins:——(*a*) They made light of Canaan itself though it was really a pleasant land; and (*b*) They lacked faith in God's word of promise to give them Canaan. Their unbelief held God to be a "liar."——"Lifted up his hand"—in the solemn oath—fulfilled by dooming them to wander forty years in that desolate wilderness till the sinning generation laid their bones there. See notes on Ps. 90 and 95.

27. To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.

28. They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

Subsequent generations, because of like sins, were borne from their land into captivity among Gentile nations. This punishment God had definitely threatened (Lev. 26: 33, 38 and Deut. 28.)——"They joined themselves"—made the closest affinity, the word used implies.——Ate the sacrifices offered to dead things, things that never had any life, powerless, senseless.

29. Thus they provoked *him* to anger with their inventions; and the plague brake in upon them.

30. Then stood up Phineas, and executed judgment. and *so* the plague was stayed.

31. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

"Inventions," as usual in the Scriptures, not at all in the mechanical sense, but wholly in the moral one of new devices for sinning; here, new gods.——"Phineas executed judgment," *i. e*

executed the Mosaic law which enjoined summary and extreme punishment on every one detected in practices connected with idolatry. The history stands in Num. 25; the Mosaic law, Ex. 32: 27–29 and Deut. 13.——As Phineas distinguished himself in this case by his zeal for God, so God distinguished him by the special blessing of an "everlasting priesthood" for himself and his posterity.

32. They angered *him* also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses for their sakes:

33. Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

The historic facts here referred to implicate Moses. The people seemed to lose sight of God's hand in bringing them forth from Egypt, and in feeding them by miracle so long, and charged upon Moses the responsibility of bringing them into that wilderness to perish (Num. 20; 3, 4). Moses was exasperated. How much of his excited feeling was personal and how much was a pious regard for the honor of Jehovah we can not know absolutely, but plainly the personal part was quite too great and too strong. The Lord said, "Take the rod; gather the people, thou and Aaron together, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock," etc. (vs. 8–13). But, this once, the meek man Moses "spake unadvisedly." "Hear now, ye rebels; must *we* fetch you water out of this rock?"—The word "*we*" suggests that Moses had sinfully lost sight of God's hand in this matter and was making it selfishly personal, as if the sin of the people were against Moses rather than against God, and the miraculous power were of his human arm rather than of God's divine arm alone. And then instead of simply "speaking" to the rock as the Lord had directed, he lifted up his hand in his strength and "smote the rock twice." Ah, he did not honor God, and his sin could not be lightly passed over. In Deut. 3: 23–26, Moses gives us the sequel of this case, his prayer that God would let him go over and see the goodly land, and the final refusal which shut off all further intercession on this point.

34. They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them:

35. But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

36. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

37. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,

38. And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.

The command to exterminate the nations of Canaan rested on two main grounds, both indicated in this Psalm as well as in the history; viz. (1) Their horrible, murderous sacrifice of their sons and daughters to the idols and devils they worshiped: (2) The moral certainty that the chosen people, living among them, would be ensnared into these gross, abominable idolatries. The land of promise was worse than worthless for their inheritance unless the Canaanites were expelled. Those nations were superior in the arts of civilized life, and were in a position, therefore, to exert a dangerous influence on the Hebrew people. Hence the command rested at once on the law of self-preservation as to Israel, and on the law of righteous retribution as to the Canaanites in view of the unendurable barbarities, inevitably begotten of their most corrupt forms of idol worship. What lower depth of social and moral debasement can be conceived of than that which is indicated by the murderous sacrifice of sons and daughters to the gods they worshiped?——This is not the place to discuss the moral character of God's edict of extermination against the Canaanites. The reader who studies attentively the abominations spread out with some detail in Lev. 18, giving due attention to vs. 21–28, will have the data for comprehending the case. The Lord there represents that their extermination was not so much of his arbitrary decree as of the very laws of social life and of humanity: "The land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants:" "that the land spew not you out also when ye defile it, as it spewed out the nations that were before you." They were too rotten, morally and socially, to live. God's earth could not bear such awful wickedness. See also Deut. 18: 9–14, and Gen. 15: 16.

39. Thus they were defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.

40. Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.

41. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them.

42. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.

The people seduced by the Canaanites whom they had spared, became self-defiled, and were fast becoming as corrupt as their corruptors, so that God "abhorred his own inheritance;" and of course would not longer protect it against hostile heathen powers. The passage seems to look specially to the portion of Hebrew history sketched in the book of Judges.

43. Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked *him* with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

44. Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry:

45. And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

46 He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.

The strong point here is that how often soever the people turned from their sins and besought God's mercy, he heard and saved. This fact was full of hope for the people of the Psalmist's age—and of all ages. He who loves to forgive, who is "plenteous in mercy to all that call upon him in truth" will surely hear the humble, imploring cry of those who penitently seek his mercy.

47. Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, *and* to triumph in thy praise.

The moral force of the whole Psalm culminates in this closing prayer. We have sinned with our fathers; we have been a sinning nation all along the ages of our national history: let us repent deeply and most humbly before the God of our national covenant and beseech him to gather us to our father-land again to give thanks to his name and to triumph in his praise.

48. Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

The intensive doxology, common at the close of the several original books of Psalms, appears here, probably as part of this Psalm, though in place also as the close of this Book IV.—— Whether this call to universal praise presupposes a favorable answer to the prayer of the verse preceding or not, there was then and always is infinite reason for universal and unceasing praise. This Book IV is full of those great facts pertaining to the goodness and the interposing mercy of God which are for evermore the rational ground of praise to the Great Father and Lord of all.

PSALM CVII

This Psalm commences the fifth and last book of the Psalter. There can be no doubt that it was compiled after the restoration from exile in Babylon, probably by Ezra and his associates.

In respect to the authorship of the ninety-four Psalms composing this Book V, it may be well to say here in general; that fifteen bear the name of David: viz., Ps. 108–110; 122; 124; 131; 133; 138–145. One [Ps. 127] is ascribed to Solomon. All the rest are anonymous. It may be assumed that these were written by the compilers whose modesty withheld their names, and that of course they belong properly to the age of the restoration. Of those

which bear the name of David, one (Ps. 108) is manifestly made up of parts taken from two of his Psalms which appear in the earlier books. Whether the others bear his name solely because written in imitation of his Psalms; or as some suppose, because written by some king on his throne, of his royal line; or whether they escaped the notice of the compilers of Books I and II but subsequently came to light; or whether they were once included in the first two books, but were subsequently transferred to this because of their special fitness to these times; in general, why they appear here and not in Book I or II, I doubt if we have the means of determining with certainty. The question does not at all affect their divine authority and inspiration, and therefore has only secondary importance. Much might be said in favor of the various hypotheses here suggested; but the data for absolute certainty seem to me to be wanting. Doubtful speculation would be of small profit.

In Ps. 107, the one leading idea—a call to praise the Lord for his mercy and for his wonderful works to men—puts it in the closest connection of thought and theme with the four that next precede it, making with them a cluster of five *praise-Psalms*. This fact does not prove that they were all written by the same man or at the same time. A subsequent author might have written any later Psalm and especially this one, having the previous Psalms before him and designing to fill out the same comprehensive theme with new facts, or with old facts put in new aspects.——Vs. 2, 3, of this Psalm suffice to locate it after the return from the exile. They show that it was composed to celebrate in the songs of the sanctuary this signal mercy to their nation. The closing thought of Psalm 106, contemplated the people in their political bondage and offered prayer for their deliverance. Fitly this Psalm follows immediately, opening the collection made up after the return from exile, assuming that the prayer was then answered and called for the offering of praise.——A little attention to the structure of this Psalm will disclose a very peculiar order and method. Four times, (viz. vs. 8, 15, 21, 31,) we have what may be called a *refrain*, in the same words; "O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men." An equal number of times we have with only the slightest variation the words—"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses," [vs. 6, 13, 19, 28]. Obviously the Psalm adduces four distinct cases of affliction, saying somewhat the same things of each; viz., (1). Houseless wanderers in the desert, hungry, thirsty and faint: (2) Prisoners in bonds: (3) men dangerously sick: (4) seafaring men, in storm and life-peril. These four sections of the Psalm close respectively with vs. 9, 16, 22, 32.——Now exegetically the main question of the Psalm is whether these four cases of affliction are treated independently as so many varieties of suffering through which men pass with similar experiences of distress, prayer for help, and praises for

redeeming mercy; or whether they are only different illustrations designed to set forth the one great affliction of the recent exile.—— The manner in which they are introduced and spoken of respectively does not forbid the former supposition; but the opening and closing of the Psalm and its manifest primary reference to the restoration from the exile strongly favor the latter.

1. O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* forever.
2. Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
3. And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

The first verse gives the scope of the whole song—a call for thanks and praise for God's goodness and enduring mercies.—— The "gathering out of all lands," can be applied justly to nothing less than the great restoration from Babylon and the East.——The last word in v. 3 translated "the south" is strictly the *sea*.

4. They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way: they found no city to dwell in.
5. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.
6. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses.
7. And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

This seems to be a description of the weary journeyings of the captives, torn away from home and country. In their extreme distress they cried to God for help. In due time he heard and saved.

8. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!
9. For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

The refrain calls appropriately for praise in view of this great mercy; while v. 9 follows with the reasons in brief for this offering of praise.

10. Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron;
11. Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the Most High:
12. Therefore he brought down their heart with labor; they fell down, and *there was* none to help.
13. Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved them out of their distresses.

14. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

15. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

16. For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

On the whole I prefer to consider these verses as suggesting a new illustration of the case of the exiles. They were captives, and figuratively if not literally were in bonds.——It should be noted that the song shows that the reason of this affliction was the great sin of the people. They rebelled against God's word and contemned his counsel. The book of Jeremiah discloses this fact most fully and painfully.

17. Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

18. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

19. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saveth them out of their distresses.

20. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions.

21. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

22. And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

Personal sickness, utter loss of appetite and strength, afford another illustration of their case. Sin as the antecedent cause stands at the head of this showing.——In v. 17, "are afflicted" should have the reciprocal sense—*afflict themselves*—bring affliction upon themselves by their own act.

23. They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

24. These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.

25. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

Seafaring men are sometimes in straits. Their case, most graphically described, affords another illustration.——In v. 24, "*These* see," the first word is made in Hebrew especially emphatic: *these*, if none others; these perhaps more than any others, see the works and wonders of the Lord.——Note here, it is God's simple *word* that raiseth the storm and lifteth high the waves of the sea.

26. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.

27. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end.

This description of shipmen in a storm is classic in all languages. Now they are borne up to the heaven on the mountain wave; now pitched down to the depths as if they were going into the very bowels of the earth; reeling, swaying; and their wisdom *swallowed up* [Hebrew].

28. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

29. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

30. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

31. Oh that *men* would praise the LORD *for* his goodness, and *for* his wonderful works to the children of men!

32. Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

Then, O how they cry to God for help! Men that never prayed before, skeptics who had scorned all faith in prayer, are on their knees in supplication. God hears and saves.——In v. 30, they, the men of the sea, are glad because, not themselves, but the waves, are quiet again.——Now let them gather in the great assembly with public praise for God's delivering mercies.

33. He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground;

34. A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

35. He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water-springs.

36. And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

37. And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

38. He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

39. Again, they are minished, and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

The central idea here is that God has such absolute control over the realm of nature that he can utterly reverse its course, and so reverse the circumstances of our lot; changing rivers to dryness; the fruitful land to barrenness; or again, the drought to copious

waterings, and the barren soil to exuberant fertility. All is in his hand.

40. He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, *where there is* no way.
41. Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh *him* families like a flock.

So, also, high station and great power as men count things great, can not save the wicked from his judgments. He can lay princes low, and exalt the poor to a state of manifold blessings.

42. The righteous shall see *it,* and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.
43. Whoso *is* wise, and will observe these *things,* even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

Such great facts in God's rule in nature and providence bring joy to his trustful, obedient people, and shut the mouth of all the wicked. It was God's purpose—pre-eminently so in the early ages of our world—to rule so that observing men should certainly see that there *is* a God—a God who rules in righteousness and awards retribution—evil on the wicked—blessings upon the just.——Let men open their eyes and observe God's ways; so they will surely see his loving-kindness to his people; and his indignation against the wicked.

PSALM CVIII.

This Psalm, ascribed to David, is made up of two selections from Psalms of David found in Book II. Vs. 1–5 appear in almost identical words in Ps. 57: 8–12; while vs. 6–12, in like manner, stand in Ps. 60: 5–12. The first selection expresses in strongest terms the writer's consecration of heart to God and also his spirit of praise and adoration: the second implores divine help against combined national enemies, coupled with strong assurance of victory through the arm of God alone. The combination of these two selections suggests that whenever the king and his people have the spirit of the first selection, they may be sure of the results indicated in the last. Thus understood, the Psalm in this form became every way pertinent to the restored Jews in the time of Nehemiah in their relations to their national enemies.——Some critics suppose that this Psalm in its present form was made up by David himself, late in his life. It seems to me more probable that the making up, by selection as above shown, was done by Ezra, or the men of his time.——The two portions that compose this Psalm having been commented on in their place, it only remains to note the variations between the texts here and there.

1. O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

2. Awake, psaltery and harp: I *myself* will awake early.

3. I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

4. For thy mercy *is* great above the heavens: and thy truth *reacheth* unto the clouds.

5. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;

In Ps. 57 David repeats the words, "my heart is fixed," but omits "even with my glory." But in the verses corresponding to our v. 2 he repeats the word "awake" (not repeated here), and then introduces "my glory." These may be taken as samples of the variations—all practically unimportant, yet sufficing to show that the transcription of the one into the other did not secure, perhaps did not attempt, perfect accuracy. The thought was more cared for than the words; the words more than their precise order.

6. That thy beloved may be delivered: save *with* thy right hand, and answer me.

7. God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

8. Gilead *is* mine; Manasseh *is* mine; Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head; Judah *is* my lawgiver;

9. Moab *is* my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.

10. Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?

11. *Wilt* not *thou*, O God, *who* hast cast us off? and wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

12. Give us help from trouble: for vain *is* the help of man.

13. Through God we shall do valiantly: for he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

The most considerable variations in the entire Psalm occur in v. 9; here, "over Philistia will I triumph;" in Ps. 60, "Philistia, triumph thou because of me," or by a better translation, "Triumph thou over me," which may be either ironical, or it may take this turn: Triumph thou in the general joy over my victory. The passage, as it stands in Ps. 108, gives the true sense in no ambiguous words.

PSALM CIX.

This Psalm is ascribed to David, and has strong affinities with other Psalms of his; *e. g.*, Ps. 35, and 58 and 69. It is customarily placed at the head of the class called "the Imprecatory Psalms," distinguished for their imprecations of judgment upon the wicked. The passages of this character in the Psalm before us are remarkable for extent, variety of phrase, and intensity (vs. 6–20, 28, 29).——If we may suppose that David's thought is chiefly upon some one individual enemy, it may have been Saul, or Absalom, or Ahithophel. Ezra and Nehemiah, taking up this Psalm from David's hand, and virtually making it their own by placing it in their collection, may have had their eye on Sanballat the Horonite (Neh. 6: 1–14).——The work of the commentator on this Psalm is in two parts: (1) To explain special words and phrases; (2) To put in its true light the subject (perplexing to many) of imprecations upon the wicked.——Some remarks on the latter point have been made above in notes on Ps. 35 and 58 and 69: 27, 28.

1. Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise;
2. For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.
3. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause.

A child of God under rancorous persecution cries to his Father for help. Great stress is laid upon the slanderous and false charges with which they sought his ruin. The same point is prominent throughout the Psalms which treat of Saul's persecution.——"God of my praise"—thou God whom it has been my joy to praise in sacred song.

4. For my love they are my adversaries: but I *give myself unto* prayer.

In requital for my love to them, they play the part of Satan against me. The Hebrew for "my adversaries" is a verb—the same from which the word Satan is derived.——The last clause is strikingly concise: "but I . . . . prayer." As for me, my heart is all prayer. I cry to God for help constantly, to strengthen me against temptation and shield me from this hot and malign persecution. Christians have need, under such circumstances, to pray without ceasing that God would help them keep their heart *right*. Let us believe that this was one chief point in David's perpetual prayer.

5. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

This was true of either Saul or Absalom as toward David. It

is in human nature, however much sanctified, to feel deeply aggrieved by such requital of evil for good. It is simply impossible that the heart should not be pained by such ingratitude and shocked by such wickedness. Such sin calls loudly for retribution, and all the elements in the character of God compel him to hear the call. Let it not surprise us that his people, sympathizing with him, have a like sense of the fitness of retribution for such sin.

6. Set thou a wicked man over him; and let Satan stand at his right hand.

The Hebrew word for "Satan" means an *adversary*—one who hates and seeks to harm. The position at the right hand, *for him*, is that of an accuser. See Zech. 3: 1 and Rev. 12: 10.——The sentiment is: Let him who acts the part of Satan toward me know in his own case what it is to have a Satan at *his* right hand, over him, with the heart to hate and the power to harm.——The second verb is in form *future*, raising the important question whether it is mere prediction or prayer. In Hebrew the future form is sometimes imperative, and is normally so when preceded, as here, by an imperative. The future forms continue mostly onward to the end of v. 11, this first imperative ("Set thou") throwing its influence over the whole passage.

7. When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.

When he shall be judged, let him go forth from the court a condemned man, and let his prayer to the court for mercy be a failure—*miss its aim*, is the original sense of the Hebrew word.

8. Let his days be few; *and* let another take his office.

This individual enemy is assumed to be in some position of responsibility. The Psalmist prays that he may die soon, and a better man take his official place. The Apostle Peter (Ac. 1: 20) applies this to the traitor Judas. The words were pertinent to his case and therefore chosen.

9. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

10. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places.

By the laws of nature and by the constitution of society it is almost inevitable that children suffer because of the sins of their parents, not however by direct but by indirect retribution. The direct retribution involved in their suffering is upon the parent. It goes to embitter the dregs of his cup.

11. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labor.

"Catch as with a snare"—by cunning arts.——"His labor" here

represents the *fruit* of his labor, both ideas, *labor*, and the *fruit* thereof, being included in the same Hebrew word.

12. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children.

13. Let his posterity be cut off; *and* in the generation following let their name be blotted out.

Both verbs in v. 12, and in the first in v. 13, are in the apocopate form which by usage demands the optative, imperative construction. Future forms come after, but by the laws of the language, must follow the strain of the verb that precedes.

14. Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.

15. Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

16. Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.

V. 16 assigns the reason: Because they would show no mercy, let no mercy be shown them. Because they chased down (Hebrew) the afflicted and heart-broken, even to slaughter, let their retribution be just and thorough, following their name and their posterity till their memory is blotted from the earth.——These conceptions—a sinner punished in his posterity; punished also by the sin of his father and of his mother coming down upon him—are deeply tinged with the oriental character. They are peculiar, not merely as being terribly strong, but as involving the sentiment that a man lives in the glory of his ancestry and in the glory of his posterity, and therefore his punishment may be knit together with theirs.

17. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.

18. As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.

A close and faithful adherence to the legitimate sense of the original is the first duty of the commentator, whether the result be or be not to his taste. I have sought to follow this rule in the verses above, where the imperative and apocopated forms of the verb demanded the construction of *prayer* as distinct from *prediction*. Now we come upon grammatical forms (in vs. 17, 18) which are simply historical, and not at all imperative or optative, *i. e.*, which are not prayer, nor even prediction. The only proper rendering is on this wise: "And he even loved cursing, and consequently [or, then] it came upon him; and he did *not* love blessing, and consequently it kept aloof from him. He even put on cursing

as his long outer robe, and consequently it came like water into his bowels and like oil into his bones."——"Loved cursing"—loved to curse others; therefore cursing came with terrible power upon him. He had no love of conferring blessings; therefore blessings did not love to come near him. As he lived in an atmosphere of cursing (we might say), but the oriental mind puts it—he girt it about him as his robe, therefore he had his fill of it, as water might fill his stomach and oil his bones. That is, God has impressed the law of retribution, (1) upon the soul of man so that it helps to work out this result;——(2) upon human society so that man's social nature and relations help forward this result;——and (3) upon the agencies of his own providential government so that they bring up toward completeness and fullness the results of righteous and terrible retribution. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The *historic fact* is the thing affirmed in these verses.

19. Let it be unto him as the garment *which* covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.

20. *Let* this *be* the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

Here the first verb is an apocopated form, of which the proper translation is: "Be this to him as a garment that shall invest him, and for a girdle which he shall gird about himself continually. This the reward of my haters from the Lord," etc. In v. 20 we have no verb expressed, and must normally supply the next preceding one. The sentiment is—Let all the influences and agencies that work out retribution for sin take effect upon the wicked men who have slandered me and sought my ruin.——The moral quality of this state of mind under his circumstances will be considered at the close of the Psalm.

21. But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy *is* good, deliver thou me.

22. For I *am* poor and needy, and my heart is wounded within me.

The sudden transition is strongly indicated by the emphatic "*Thou*" at the head of the sentence. But all unlike my wicked haters, *Thou*, O Lord my God, art my Refuge; show mercy to me; execute, *do*, by thine interposing arm, for thy name's sake. The grounds of his plea are (1) God's great and good mercy; (2) His own utter weakness, and his smitten, suffering state.——"My heart wounded," pierced as with daggers.

23. I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust.

As shadows far stretched out soon *go* utterly from view, so I am almost *gone*. The tossing up and down of the locust alludes

to the strong winds which were God's agents in nature for driving them away upon seas or other lands.

24. My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness.

Perhaps his afflictions from persecuting enemies were aggravated by wasting sickness or the infirmities of age, as in the times of Adonijah.——"Flesh faileth of fatness;" becomes lean, emaciated.

25. I became also a reproach unto them: *when* they looked upon me they shaked their heads.

26. Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy:

27. That they may know that this *is* thy hand; *that* thou, LORD, hast done it.

The word "I" is made emphatic here by writing the pronoun as in the case of "*Thou*" (v. 21). As for me, I became a butt of ridicule to them; they will look at me and will wag the head"—these verbs being future.——"Save me according to thy mercy" [which will surely be a great and notable salvation], "and they *will* know" [future]; they can not fail to know—"that this is thy hand" etc. He longs to have God's interposing hand in his deliverance so signally conspicuous that they shall surely see it, and shall know that God approves the right as warmly as he abhors the wrong.

28. Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice.

29. Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame; and let them cover themselves with their own confusion as with a mantle.

It is better here to translate with grammatical precision, on this wise: "They will curse, but *Thou* wilt bless: they have risen up" [as mine enemies,] "and consequently were confounded; but thy servant" [myself, because I am thy servant] "will rejoice. My haters will be clothed with shame; they will cover themselves with their own disgrace as with a mantle."

30. I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude.

31. For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save *him* from those that condemn his soul.

The tenses throughout these verses are future, as they were throughout vs. 28, 29. Here [not there] our English version has rendered them accurately.——The sentiment—I will praise the Lord, my Deliverer, with voice and tongue and before the great congregation, because I know he will stand for the help of the innocent, defenseless ones, to save them from their mortal foes.

It now remains to speak of the *imprecations* in this Psalm—those passages which invoke punishments or judgments upon the wicked.——The attentive reader will have noticed that in my view our English version gives the imprecatory sense in several passages where the original does not. With all respect for those excellent men, I marvel that they should have erred on that side. I do not wonder that they should stand squarely and firmly up to the demands of the original tongue; but only that they should have gone *beyond* those demands. The true mission of the translator as of the expositor is to meet those demands with the utmost possible precision, it being the function of God only to speak the word; of his servants, honestly to interpret.——There is real imprecation in this Psalm, and we are now to inquire into its moral character considered as the utterance of the author: Is it, or is it not, consistent with Christian love, with the spirit of the gospel of Christ?——The subject has broad applications; *e. g.*, to the question, Will the holy in heaven acquiesce in the punishment of the wicked in hell—even the saved father in the doom of a son incorrigibly wicked and hopelessly lost?

The solution of this great question turns on a power of mind common to all intelligent moral agents by which we are able to contemplate any other moral agent variously, holding him before our mind, now in one light, now in another, according to the features which are prominent in his case, as thus: We are able to love the *man* and hate the *sinner;* to love him thought of as man; but to hate, not his conduct only but himself, its responsible author, thought of simply as a destroyer of other's happiness. Thinking of him as a sentient being, capable of happiness and of misery, we desire his happiness, we deprecate his misery; but thinking of him as the deliberate and sworn foe and destroyer of all happiness, even to his utmost power, we wish and pray that God's retribution may seize upon him, arrest his career of mischief, and make his sufferings exemplary for the restraint of others like-minded toward evil. The traitor in arms against his country we shoot down and spare not: the same rebel, wounded, disarmed, and at our mercy, we spare and lift up as swiftly as we smote him when in arms. Thinking of man as a fellow-creature, as one whose sensibilities to joy or woe are like our own, we love his welfare and mourn over his fall; but thinking of him as the enemy of God, as the determined foe of all real, high, and noble blessedness in the universe, our indignation is bound to rise against him; we can not suppress it; we are false to the highest interests of truth and right if we disapprove or restrain it. "Do not I hate them, O God, who hate thee? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them not *thine* enemies only, but mine." [Ps. 139: 21, 22.] ——Assuming now that David wrote this Psalm and had his eye on Saul or Ahithophel as the "Satan," the malign enemy, seeking to break down his reputation by lies and to take his life by violence. it is quite vital to our main question to ask—Did David hate

Saul *as a man*, or did he simply withstand him in self-defense, and abhor his murderous spirit as intrinsically base and therefore worthy of reprobation? Did he hate Ahithophel, thought of simply as a fellow-being; or rather, did he detest his treachery and ingratitude, and execrate his base plots against his life-long friend and benefactor?——The history gives a beautiful record as to David's spirit toward Saul. Once and again, while in armed pursuit of David and bent on his death, he fell into David's power, yet only to bring out the noble magnanimity and the pure benevolence of David's heart toward him. And when he fell slain on Mt. Gilboa, no heart in all Israel bemoaned his fate more deeply than David's. It would almost seem that this touching narrative (2 Sam. 1:) was put on record to help us interpret these imprecatory Psalms of David; *i. e.*, to show that, *personally*, David's heart was nobly generous and singularly exempt from all malign feeling toward his worst public enemies. But thinking of Saul, as selfishly, madly, malignly bent on taking his life, and for this end upon destroying his good name first, he could not do less than withstand him; nay more, he could not do less than reprobate his wicked spirit. David had a right to live and he knew it. God had a right to call him to the throne of Israel, and David had really no right to decline the call. Hence God was with David and David was (in sympathy) with God in the measures taken to plant David in due time upon that throne. The enemies to this measure were at once the enemies of David and of God. *Viewed as such enemies*, David ought to pray for their defeat and for their just punishment. His case illustrates the broad principle that it is within our power as moral beings to love a fellow-creature considered simply as such, while we detest and hate him for his antagonism against God and against others' happiness. We love him as sentient, but hate him as wicked; love him in view of his personal happiness; but hate him in view of his guilty hostility to others' happiness, his hostility to God and to all that is good.—— If now this distinction has been made plain to the reader, he will see its bearing upon the moral attitude of all the holy in heaven toward the lost in their eternal doom. The necessity and the responsibilities of civil government in this world of crime furnish apt illustration. The men of largest, purest benevolence are the best men to frame criminal law; the best men to administer it from the bench; the best men to execute it in prison, in penitentiary, or upon the scaffold. Solemnly and firmly, with tender compassion, yet with unflinching fidelity, they may love the culprit, but they must inflict the penalty he deserves. In the righteous demands of law they acquiesce simply because there is a greater good behind which must be protected by the lesser sacrifice of the guilty criminal. Under the stress of a necessity which they deplore, they say from the bottom of their heart—The guilty man must die; we should deprecate his escape; in behalf of all society and of universal good, we feel a sense of relief when jus-

tice exacts the murderer's life—blood for blood.——The tribunal of the Supreme Judge of the universe differs from this only as being perfect and universal. Justice is the same thing there as here. Benevolence is the same. The ultimate question, therefore, is reduced to this: Shall God reign, or shall Satan? Shall the right triumph, or the wrong? Shall the innocent be protected, or the guilty; the good in heart, or the evil? And to our present point—Where shall our sympathies be; with God, or with his enemies? This is the ultimate question, beyond which we have no occasion to go.

PSALM CX.

This Psalm, short but rich in thought, is ascribed to David. It bears the impress of the same hand which wrote Ps. 2, and is fitly considered its counterpart. As there the Messiah was set forth as a conqueror, subduing all his foes and receiving the nations as his inheritance, so here he rules over his enemies, subdues the kings of the nations, and especially, bears the office of priest as well as king. This latter is additional to what we have in Ps. 2—a step in advance in the progress of doctrine in respect to the person and work of the Great Messiah. It appears in the later prophet Zechariah (6: 13), and may be foreshadowed in Isa. 53.——This Psalm is applied to the Messiah by the Jewish fathers; by the very early Syriac version in the words: "A prophecy of Christ's victory over his enemies"; and, higher than all other testimony, by Jesus himself (Mat. 22: 41, and Mk. 12: 35, and Lk. 20: 41). These passages show that the Jews of that age recognized their expected Messiah in this Psalm, and also that Jesus applied the Psalm to himself in an argument which none of his opponents could resist.——Furthermore, the New Testament writers repeatedly recognize and honor this Psalm as referring to Christ by their application to him of the words, "Sit at my right hand." No special emphasis should be given to the word "sit" as compared with any other posture; position at the right hand is the main thing. Hence Stephen saw him "standing at the right hand of God" (Ac. 7: 56), and Paul (Rom. 8: 34) has it simply, "*is* at the right hand," etc. Sitting, however, is the usual posture of royalty; a king *sits* on his throne. See other New Testament references, in Mat. 26: 64, and Eph. 1: 20, and Heb. 1: 3, 13 and 8: 1, and 10: 12, and 1 Pet. 3: 22, and Rev. 3: 21. ——Another corresponding class of New Testament passages indorses the words, "make thine enemies thy footstool;" *e. g.*, 1 Cor. 15: 25, and Eph. 1: 22, and Heb. 10: 13.——To these should be added the strong support given to the Messianic interpretation of this Psalm by the allusion to his priesthood as taught here in v. 4. The writer to the Hebrews makes this point strikingly emphatic (Heb. 5: 6–10, and 6: 20, and 7: and 8). In-

deed chapters 7 and 8 are a full discourse upon this v. 4 as the text, amplifying the subject in its numerous bearings. Nothing more need be said to sustain the Messianic character of this Psalm, or to show its commanding place in the gospel system of doctrine concerning Jesus Christ. Yet the subject would not be exhausted short of a careful comparison of numerous New Testament passages which assert another of the grand sentiments of this Psalm, viz., the ultimate victory of King Messiah over all his enemies—a fact which appears frequently in the Epistles, but nowhere in more majestic outlines than in the Revelation of John.

1. The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

"The Lord [Hebrew] Jehovah.——The Hebrew word for "saith" is used only for prophetic declarations: literally, the *announcement* of Jehovah; the thing prophetically foretold. See Jer. 23: 30, 31, which shows that the false prophets stole this phrase from the true prophets, and thereby incurred the Lord's special indignation.——"Unto my Lord"—who yet was David's Son. That the Messiah was David's Son is not affirmed in this Psalm, but was earliest foretold in 2 Sam. 7, and often thenceforward; was wrought into the entire web of Hebrew genealogy, and appears prominently in prophecy, *e. g.*, Isa. 11: 1, 10, and Jer. 23: 5 and 30: 9, and Ezek. 34: 23, 24, and 37: 24, 25, and Hos. 3: 5. There is not the least doubt that this was the well understood faith of the Jews in our Savior's time.——The argument of our Savior with the Jews turns upon the sentiment, ever held in honor among the patriarchal people, that terms of high respect, reverence, and authority, were appropriately used by sons of their fathers, but not by fathers of their sons. How then should David call one who was his Son his Lord? This argument of our Savior was a claim to a nature higher than human, of which Ps. 2 was explicit prophetic authority. Jehovah said to him, "Thou art *my* Son"!——"Sit thou at my right hand." The right hand being a natural emblem of power, to be near the right hand of one strong to save implies assured protection. The Psalms abound in cases falling under this principle; *e. g.*, Ps. 109: 31—"For he [God] shall stand at the right hand of the poor to save," etc. Also Ps. 16: 8, "Because he [the Lord] is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Also Ps. 73: 23, and 121: 5.——But the passage before us means more than this. Sitting here supposes a throne and the sitting is that of a king, of one enthroned in equal majesty and honor. The Messiah is not there to be personally protected, but to be invested with the purple of the heavenly kingdom, to reign jointly with the Father.——"Until I make thine enemies thy footstool"—the Almighty arm being pledged to this result, and the promise good till it shall be achieved. What is beyond and after this result is not said here.——That complete subjugation lies in this figure—"thine enemies thy footstool" seems to come from the

usages of ancient warfare, of which we have traces in Josh. 10: 24, and Isa. 26: 6, and Mal. 4: 3.

2. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

"Rod," an instrument for chastising, an emblem of power. Here the phrase means—Thy strong rod. Its "going forth from Zion" indicates either that Zion had been, under the ancient economy, the place of God's visible abode—the God revealed under that economy being no other than the Eternal Son; or that his militant people would go forth from Zion, soldiers in his martial campaign. The latter seems most in harmony with the strain of the passage.——The "ruling" expressed by the Hebrew word here contemplates force in the subjection of enemies.

3. Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

Nothing could be more foreign from the true sense of these words than the assumption, sometimes made, that this force is exerted upon his people to bring them into obedience. The real meaning of the clause is the very opposite of this. "Thy people shall be *free-will offerings*, like that class of offerings under the Mosaic law which were required by no vow and by no specific statute, but were offered by any pious Israelite spontaneously.—— "Day of thy power" is no other than the day of thy going forth to war against thy foes—*martial* power being the exact sense of the word. Thy people shall be volunteers in the day of thy war against thine enemies.——"In the beauties of holiness" means primarily in holy garments, like those of the priesthood. Yet the ultimate sense is doubtless—with holy hearts, with spirits consecrated and devoted in love and sincerity to their Lord.——The principal pause of the verse should come in here rather than after the word "morning."——All critics acknowledge difficulties in the last half of this verse. Undeniably we have here the bold but beautiful poetic conception that the morning brings forth as from its womb the dew—an emblem of freshness, vigor, and beauty. Then the choice lies between these two constructions: (1) Taking "youth" to mean young men, and giving the word for "from" its very common sense—*more than*—we have this construction and meaning: More than the dew-drops of the morning are the vigorous young men of thy martial hosts.——(2) Taking "youth" in its usual sense, and referring it to the Messiah himself, we have this: As by the dew from the womb of morning, thy youth is sustained evermore in its freshness and beauty.——Of the best critics, some favor the one and some the other of these two constructions. The former has for its support that it holds the same subject before the mind throughout the verse—the Messiah's people, ready, strong, and in countless hosts for his spiritual warfare: also that the com

parison of a multitudinous army to the fallen dewdrops is not unknown to the Hebrew mind. (See 2 Sam. 17: 12). The latter has for its chief support the more common usage of the word "youth." The former has my preference.——All this looks toward the certain and glorious victory of King Messiah over his foes, and gives us a glowing view of the marshaled hosts of his people, prompt, cheerfully ready, and eager for the conflict; going forth in the beauties of inward holiness; countless in number, and clothed in the freshness and beauty of youthful strength evermore renewed like the eagle's by waiting in humble faith on their Lord.

4. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou *art* a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

The allusion to the "holy garments" worn by his people ["beauties of holiness"] seems to have suggested the great idea of this verse—the perpetual priesthood of the Messiah. The remarkable fact of his character is that he is at once *Priest* and *King*. Neither function interferes with the other; both are held and exercised in their perfection. A Priest—himself the one great sacrifice; and this having been made once for all, then ascending on high and ever living to be the Mediator and High Priest of his people:—such are the staple facts in this class of his functions as given in the epistle to the Hebrews [chap. 7], developed there from this prophecy as its text. But together with these functions of the priest, he is also and none the less a Mighty *King*, clothed with all requisite power, marshaling the hosts of his conquering army, and certain of complete and glorious victory.——"After the order of Melchizedek," who seems to have been both priest and king. (See Gen. 14: 18–20). He had moreover this other peculiarity—that unlike the lineal priesthood of Aaron, running from father to son through long successive generations, he stands one and alone, the record giving no word as to his ancestry or posterity—no light as to his birth or his death. *Strictly by the record*, he stands before us "without beginning of days or end of years"—fit emblem, therefore, of Christ's everlasting priesthood.

5. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

The appearance of solecism in placing both Father and Son each at the right hand of the other, will be obviated by assuming that the words in v. 1 and here are only figurative, indicating rather their mutual relations than their position in reference to each other. The diversity in phrase is apparently due to the change of speaker. In v. 1, the Father addresses the Son. In v. 5 the Psalmist speaks. "The Lord at thy right hand" means only—The Jehovah who befriends and sustains Thee.——"Shall strike through kings," and by implication, their subjects no less. No opposing power can withstand him. Nations shall be subdued to

Messiah's scepter. As said in Ps. 2; "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen" [the nations] "for thine inheritance."

6. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill *the places* with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

7. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

"Shall judge"—in his exalted functions as universal King and Lord. His foes fall in slaughtered heaps, over vast countries. This carries out the conception of deadly war—the figure here, as in Ps. 2, being taken from the martial life of King David. How far the ultimate thought is physical destruction of enemies, and how far their spiritual subjection by the power of truth and love, we could not determine absolutely from these Psalms alone; but are thrown upon other collateral prophecies for the light we need upon this question. A store-house of explanatory truth on this point may be found in Isaiah; witness chap. 9: 1–7, and 11: 1–10, 42: 1–7, and 55: 6–13, and 61: 1–3, etc., etc.——"Shall drink of the brook in the way"—"faint, yet pursuing;" refreshing himself by quick draughts of water in his hot pursuit, and then on to victory! Therefore shall he raise high the head in the triumph of complete success. His untiring zeal, his resistless spirit, insure his glorious triumph.

PSALM CXI.

This and the two succeeding Psalms are a group of praise-Psalms, each commencing with "Hallelu-Jah"—praise ye Jah, *i. e.*, Jehovah. This clause indicates the theme and purpose of each song, viz., to set forth the glorious works of the Lord as the ground and reason why he should be praised.——This Psalm is an acrostic on the Hebrew Alphabet, each successive clause beginning with its successive letters; in each of the first eight verses, two clauses; in each of the last two, three. This would aid the memory.——As to the date of these three praise-Psalms, we may safely locate them in the age of the restoration from the exile.

1. Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and *in* the congregation.

2. The works of the LORD *are* great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

"I will praise the Lord," etc. The Psalmist not only calls on others—all his people—all men in every land and every age—*to*

praise the Lord, but avows his own earnest purpose to praise God with all his heart. Let every reader be a worshiper, and every worshiper throw his own soul into these words of the song and make this avowal his own!——In the last clause of v. 2: "Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein," the Hebrew will bear either this sense or another, viz., sought out according to all their desirableness. The original may be either an adjective—by such as delight in them; or a noun—for their delightfulness. In either construction the sentiment is true.

3. His work *is* honorable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth forever.

4. He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD *is* gracious and full of compassion.

Primarily the thought here is of those gracious works of providence which had so adorned and distinguished the ancient history of the covenant people. It was inspiring to the returned exiles to recall those ancient works, to think of the mercy that shone forth in them, and of their being impressed on the national heart for everlasting remembrance.

5. He hath given meat unto them that fear him; he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

"Meat"—food in general, yet in usage the word suggests food that costs effort, like that obtained by the hunter, or plucked, gathered with labor. The Israelites might naturally think of food supplied to their fathers in the Arabian desert—food of God's own preparation. His covenant held him to provide for his people in their emergencies—then as always.

6. He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

He hath made the great power of his arm manifest in his works, even to the extent of giving them Canaan and all its wealth as their inheritance. The inference suggested is that a God of such power can give his people the inheritance of all the nations *for Christ*, so that the labor of going forth into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature and bring all the nations to know and to serve the risen Jesus shall not prove abortive.

7. The works of his hands *are* verity and judgment; all his commandments *are* sure.

8. They stand fast for ever and ever, *and are* done in truth and uprightness.

Two things, distinct yet related, are brought together in these verses, viz., what God himself does, and what he commands his people to do. The former are true and just; the latter are "sure" in the sense of being worthy of being accepted as from God, and therefore obeyed. Then in v. 8, inverting the order of these two themes, the com-

mandments are said to be *established* forever, and God's works are declared to be done in truth and uprightness.

9. He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend *is* his name.

10. The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do *his commandments:* his praise endureth for ever.

"He sent redemption to his people," first from Egypt; last, from Babylon; the former giving pledge of the latter, and both guaranteeing God's ever faithful love and his swift redeeming power in his people's behalf in every time of their need.——"He hath commanded his covenant forever"—"command" in the sense of ordain, constitute. His covenant with his people is no ephemeral, transient thing. It was made for all time—as good for the ages yet to come as for any of the ages past.——The name of Him who thus remembers his people and abides forever faithful to his covenant should be held in holy reverence by all his saints, through all the ages. Such reverential fear, of which obedience, trust, and homage are the cardinal manifestations, constitute the highest wisdom—the first step and the last in a wise purpose and life. This thought is worth repeating; therefore the Psalmist adds: All who obey God evince a good understanding—a wholesome and discreet wisdom. Nothing less, nothing else, is truly wise. All other ways of moral living are folly and madness. ——Kindred sentiments appear in Prov. 1: 7, and 9: 10, and in Job 28: 28.

PSALM CXII.

Like Psalm 111 this, too, is a praise-Psalm, and also a Hebrew acrostic on the same pattern. For these reasons this might be presumed to be one of a pair with that—a presumption fully confirmed by the strain of the Psalm itself. Whereas that praised God for his mercy to his covenant people, this correspondingly praises him for his mercy to the individual saint. Whereas that closed with affirming the wisdom of obeying God in humble fear, this resumes the point there briefly touched and dropped, and presents in detail the blessings of piety and prosperity which are sure to the truly wise and upright man.

1. Praise ye the LORD. Blessed *is* the man *that* feareth the LORD, *that* delighteth greatly in his commandments.

2. His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

3. Wealth and riches *shall be* in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

The fact that "fearing the Lord" and "delighting greatly in his commandments" are common elements in the same character suffices to show that this fear is not servile but filial—is not that of the driven slave but that of the loving child. The real slave never has "great delight" in his master's commandments.——Let the reader note that this Psalm aims to show that fearing the Lord is true wisdom, and to show it by the absolute *success* of a life so ordered. Wisdom being the best adjustment of means to secure the desired end, the truest test of wisdom is success. That life is a wisely ordered one which brings the best results of blessedness. Hence the scope of this Psalm.——The first points made here are (*a*) That the wise man is blessed in his children and his children's children; (*b*) In the wealth of his house, made sure under the ancient economy by his abiding integrity and beneficence ["righteousness"].——Noticeably the very same words affirm the enduring righteousness of this just man that were used of God in v. 3 of the previous Psalm—suggesting that the good man becomes a follower of God as a dutiful child follows his father.

4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: *he is* gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

Even an upright man may perchance have some seasons of darkness; but soon there ariseth a light upon his darkness like that of the rising sun upon a rayless night. By a most beautiful figure the Hebrew verb suggests the rising sun.——The last clause of the verse may look toward the reason of this as existing in his kind and loving heart toward others in their sufferings. Here, again, the same words are used of the good man's heart which are so often used of his heavenly Father's, as *e. g.* in Ps. 111: 4.

5. A good man showeth favor, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

The Hebrew can not be grammatically translated "a good man," but must be read, "Happy is the man." Under this construction the Psalmist starts anew after the manner of v. 1: "Blessed is the man," etc.——"Lendeth"—not on usury, but in compassion.——"He will guide" [better, *sustain*] his affairs with good judgment, and so insure prosperous results.

6. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

"Shall not be moved"—shall not be changed in character and consequently in condition. He shall undergo no such change long as he may live.——The next clause looks onward beyond his death. His memory shall live after him. Some critics give the clause this turn: In eternal remembrance he shall be known *as righteous, i. e.*, rather his righteousness than himself shall be remembered; as if to say, in the strongest form, that he is remembered *only* for his righteousness.

7. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

Shall not be afraid of evil tidings *when they actually come*, the words here used mean, rather than being afraid lest they may come. Doubtless both are true of the good man whose heart abides fixed in trust upon his God. Literally the passage would read—"He shall not fear *because of* evil tidings." Believing that God's providence shapes all events, and confiding in his love without a fear, why may he not be calm and fearless under any new event brought to his knowledge as "evil tidings?"

8. His heart *is* established, he shall not be afraid, until he see *his desire* upon his enemies.

9. He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth forever; his horn shall be exalted with honor.

"Shall not be afraid *until* he seeth his desire upon his enemies"—nor after that, either. The strain of the passage and its whole argument forbid any such implication.——Devoting himself to beneficence toward the poor, he insures God's protection in his emergencies. God will lift high his horn of power. See Ps. 75: 4, and 89: 17.

10. The wicked shall see *it*, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

All unlike this is the case of the wicked. He shall see the prosperity of the righteous, and be vexed and galled in spirit thereby. Ah, how soon shall his hopes and himself perish utterly and forever!

PSALM CXIII.

This third in order of the praise-Psalms fitly closes the triplet by making the call to praise universal, through all time and over all the earth (vs. 1–3); by setting forth most sublime views of God's greatness and excellent glory (vs. 4–6); coupled with certain specific illustrations of his special blessings on classes most needy (vs. 7–9).

1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

The phrase, "Servants of the Lord" to designate his professed people, appears quite prominently in the age of the restoration. It may be seen Ps. 136: 22, but especially in Ezra 5: 11, and Neh. 1: 10; "We are the servants of the God of heaven"—designedly distinguishing themselves from all other people by the name of

the God they served: "Now these are thy servants and thy people"—bringing up these relations before God as the ground of confidence in prayer for his own Zion.——All such servants are here exhorted to join in offering to their own great God the exalted praise which is his due.

2. Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.

3. From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name *is* to be praised.

Such a God should be praised through all the ages onward, for he has already wrought praiseworthy deeds enough to call for everlasting praise.——Over all the earth too, for nowhere does he ever leave himself without witness to his glorious goodness and mercy.

4. The LORD *is* high above all nations, *and* his glory above the heavens.

5. Who *is* like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high,

6. Who humbleth *himself* to behold *the things that are* in heaven, and in the earth!

Comparing God with his created works, he is high above all his intelligent creatures, though massed even by nations; and the glory of his infinite being eclipses the very heavens. Who can be compared with Him, dwelling *so high*, and yet humbling himself so low in condescending care of his lowly creatures!

7. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;

8. That he may set *him* with princes, *even* with the princes of his people.

9. He maketh the barren woman to keep house, *and to be* a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

The case of lifting up the lowly to an estate so high suggests David, as the blessing upon the barren woman seems to indicate Hannah or possibly Abraham's Sarah. The Hebrew of the last verse should rather be read; "He maketh the barren one of the house the joyful mother of children." A few specific cases well known in Hebrew history would serve to give definite impressions of God's condescension to the humblest of his people.——Thinking of these three praise-Psalms as written in the age of the restoration, we may fitly remember that the restoration itself was a grand theme for national praise. The great sin of their national apostasy from God at length forgiven; the bands of their national captivity broken and that by agencies in which the hand of God was far more visible than the hand of man; the exiles safely

home in the father-land; the temple going up or finished, to their unspeakable joy: surely this should have been the era for national Psalms of praise. It is pleasant to see that there were faithful prophets of God and honest governors of Judah who appreciated their duty in this matter, and who led forth the masses of the people in lofty praise by means of the songs of the great congregation.

PSALM CXIV.

This gem of Hebrew poetry, coming down to us with no name of author, and with no special clew to its date except its place in the compilation, doubtless belongs to the age of the restoration. It serves to show how beautifully they could weave into their songs for the sanctuary the grand facts of their nation's early history. The prayer of Nehemiah (chap. 9) witnesses to the use made of those same grand facts in their historical point of view, to inspire faith, to encourage prayer, and to suggest the great moral lessons taught there concerning their nation's God and his people.

1. When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;
2. Judah was his sanctuary, *and* Israel his dominion.

"When Israel went out of Egypt"—yet not restricting his view to that precise point of time. *Then* and *subsequently*—embracing the series of events that followed.——"A people of strange language"—of a foreign tongue, unknown to the sons of Jacob. So the history of Joseph shows. It indicated the hardships of their lot that the people to whom they were in political bondage were so foreign in their nationality and tongue.——"Judah was his sanctuary;" *i. e.*, the *place* of it, and the people who were consecrated to him as his. "Israel was his kingdom." Such were not only the tenor but the very words of the covenant; "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (Ex. 19: 6).

3. The sea saw *it*, and fled; Jordan was driven back.
4. The mountains skipped liked rams, *and* the little hills like lambs.

The Red Sea saw not it "but *God*." Well might it "flee!" "Jordan was turned back" [Hebrew]; forced up stream, and its waters piled into heaps (Josh. 3: 13, 16).——"The mountains skipped," etc.—by poetic license to represent the historic fact that Mt. Sinai "quaked greatly" (Ex. 19: 18).

5. What *ailed* thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? thou Jordan, *that* thou wast driven back?

6. Ye mountains, *that* ye skipped like rams; *and* ye little hills, like lambs?

7. Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

8. Which turned the rock *into* a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

As if the Red Sea, the Jordan and Mt. Sinai, had a conscious, intelligent life, and were able to give an account of themselves for their strange movements! This is bold but most beautiful personification. The poet asks them this most reasonable question, yet he neither expects nor waits for their answer, but virtually gives it himself. It was but fit that all nature should stand in awe before her glorious Creator. Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord Jehovah, who is the very God of Jacob—for think yet further what wonders his hand hath wrought who "turned the rock into a pool of water," etc. The reader will readily refer this to the two miracles which brought water from the rock; first at Rephidim (Ex. 17: 1–7); next at Kadesh (Num. 20: 1–11). Compare Ps. 107: 35 and Deut. 8: 15. What can not such a God do for his needy people in any possible emergency? "Is any thing too hard for the Lord"—the mighty Lord of nature?

PSALM CXV.

This Psalm corresponds so admirably in subject-matter and tone to the circumstances of the restoration, that it leaves no doubt as to its date and occasion. The people have had some blessings, but they ask much more. God has broken the bands of their national bondage; but still they are few in number; weak in political strength; are not even above reproach and insult from adjacent idolators. But their God is mighty—infinitely far above the gods of the heathen, and quite able to set them on high above such reproaches. To such trust the Psalm exhorts all classes of the restored people.

1. Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, *and* for thy truth's sake.

This is not an exhortation to men to ascribe glory to God, but a prayer to God that he would glorify himself for his own name's sake. The address is to the Lord, and the imperative, "give glory," is prayer that he would secure it for himself. This by no means conflicts with the delightful duty devolving on God's people to give him all glory; it rather assumes this, and goes still farther, even to the prayer that God would do the great things we ask of him, not to glorify us, but himself.

2. Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* now their God?

3. But our God *is* in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

These supposed or real words of the heathen are simply reproachful. "If they have any God, where is He? They are badly in need of his help: Why does he not come to their relief?"——Whereupon the Psalmist says, Why should they have the least occasion to say this? Why, O Lord, wilt thou not shut their mouths forever from uttering such reproachful words against thy people and yet more against Thyself? Compare Ps. 79: 10.——"Where is now"—but the Hebrew does not ask—Where is their God *now*, in this emergency; but Where, pray,—do tell us where is their God? The Hebrew word * is used to make "*where*" more emphatic, and to give the question a touch of sarcasm and insult.——The Psalmist answers; "Our God is in the heavens, where he should be; on his lofty throne, mighty for any work he may please to do. As he has heretofore done all his pleasure, so he can still.——As to the suggestive force of the thought—God is in heaven, see Ps. 2: 4, and 11: 4, and 103: 19.

4. Their idols *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

5. They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:

6. They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:

7. They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

8. They that make them are like unto them; *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

Turning the tables and retorting their reproaches, the Psalmist says; "Their gods are nothing but a *variety of manufactures;* man-made things; at best, but silver and gold; often of wood only.——See the same way of exposing the folly of idol worship; Isa. 40: 18–20, and 44: 9–20, and 46: 5–7, and Jer. 10: 3–15.——They are made with mouths; but these are only mere imitations, with no power to speak. As the Hebrew has it, they *will* not speak [future tense]; they never will, never can, say the first word. So in all these specifications, the future means not only that they can not now, but that they *never* will or can.——They have hands, but they handle nothing; never use them; never even *touch* with those useless hands.——"Neither speak they through their throat"—means they never make even the inarticulate, guttural noises common to the lower animals, which fall far short of the articulate

voice.——No less void of sense than these senseless idols are all their makers and their worshipers. This very worship proves their miserable folly.

9. O Israel, trust thou in the LORD; he *is* their help and their shield.

10. O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD; he *is* their help and their shield.

11. Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he *is* their help and their shield.

In each of these three verses, the first clause exhorts in direct address, in the second person; the last clause assigns the reason, in the third person. The distinction of person might be represented not badly by uttering the exhortation with full, loud tone, and the reason in an undertone.——"The house of Aaron" became specially prominent both in numbers and in activity after the restoration compared with what they were before. This prominence appears in the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. (Hag. 1: 1, 12, 14, and 2: 11–13, Zech. 7: 3, 5, etc).

12. The LORD hath been mindful of us; he will bless *us;* he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.

13. He will bless them that fear the LORD, *both* small and great.

Far from assuming that we have had no blessings from our God yet, we gratefully acknowledge his favor in our past history, and derive from it the assurance of fresh mercies for the future.—— In v. 12, the second and third clauses should be brought more closely together to give its due force to the repetition: "He will bless; surely he will bless the house of Israel. The small with the great;" absolutely *all* the people.

14. The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.

15. Ye *are* blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.

Increase of population was a matter of great moment to the infant colony of Judea. That their Jehovah made heaven and earth would suggest his infinite resources for blessing his people. Who could ask a more powerful Friend, a richer God than he?

16. The heaven, *even* the heavens, *are* the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

The first clause seems to suggest not so much that the Lord owns or claims as his own the heavens as that He makes them his *abode*, while he gives the earth to man as his. "The heavens are heavens for the Lord to dwell in," etc. The inference thought

of is that the Lord will befriend us with a great increase of population. When he had finished this fair earth and placed man upon it, he said, "Be fruitful and multiply; replenish the earth" given you for your abode.

17. The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

18. But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

The dead can not join in our public praises in the great congregation. This seems to be the controlling thought, giving shape to the expression in this passage. It should not be taken as affirming any thing respecting their conscious existence or agency in their future life. The antithesis is made strongly between *their* place in our earthly songs and *our own*. We who yet live can lift up our grateful songs in God's temple; but their voices in these songs are unheard; as to them, here and now, all is silent!——The same construction obtains in other similar passages; *e. g.*, Ps. 6: 5, and 30: 9, and 88: 10–12, and Isa. 38: 18.——But we, the living, will give thee our grateful praises.

PSALM CXVI.

The occurrence in this Psalm of certain grammatical forms which indicate the later age of the Hebrew tongue has carried the judgment of critics in favor of dating it after the captivity. To this its place in the Psalter corresponds. Vs. 18, 19 imply that the temple had then been rebuilt.——In subject this is a thanksgiving song for restoration from sickness, yet may be used suggestively in thanksgiving for any great blessing after calamity.

1. I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice *and* my supplications.

2. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon *him* as long as I live.

Strictly the tenses are—"I have loved the Lord, for he *will* hear, etc.; but in this passage (as often) both the past and the future tenses have an eye to the present, thus: I have loved the Lord and do still love him, because he not only hears my supplications now, but will hear in all my future life.——Because he has bent his ear low to my feeble voice, therefore will I call upon him in both prayer and praise throughout my days of life. The calling upon God, thought of here, manifestly included praise. (See v. 13).——This is the grateful utterance of the convalescent who has felt the pains and prostrations of disease, but now looks out once more upon the joys of active life and usefulness.

3. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

4. Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

The first clauses are from Ps. 18: 4, 5.——The pains of hell ["sheol," the grave and death] literally "*found*" me, but the word implies a vigorous grasp upon him.——"I found" (and said to myself, I *shall* find) only trouble, etc., the verb being future. I have this at present; and nothing better in prospect.——"Deliver my soul," but with no emphasis on "soul" as the spiritual part—the sense being primarily—Spare my life; save me from the jaws of death.

5. Gracious *is* the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God *is* merciful.

6. The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

The first impression on the mind and the first utterance is of God's grace and mercy—to be spoken of even before he tells us of his restoration.——The "simple"—the sincere; those of single eye and of one heart to fear and trust God.——"He helped me"—is literally, he *saved* me; brought salvation to me.

7. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

8. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, *and* my feet from falling.

9. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

As Noah's wandering dove came home to the ark for a place of *rest* [the same word as here], so the pious soul returns to God. Under genial skies, one might leave the ark and find temporary rest for the sole of his foot out on the wide world; but when the floods beat and the wild waters surge, there is but one relief—"Return unto thy rest, O my soul!" O, is there any other such blessedness as this sweet rest in God!——The purpose of grateful, loving service should be noted and never forgotten; "I will walk," *i. e.*, in the converse of a close communion and in the activities of a willing service. The same word expresses Enoch's "*walking* with God."

10. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:

11. I said in my haste, All men *are* liars.

This passage is somewhat difficult. The choice seems to me to lie between the two following constructions.——(1) "I have believed, *for* I have spoken, *i. e.*, of God's truth and faithfulness as I should not have done if I had not believed; I was greatly afflicted, and said in my haste, "All men are false"—but God is true and

he alone is to be trusted—more emphasis being laid on the latter thought, implied, than on the one expressed.——(2) "I have believed *although* I have spoken; I was greatly afflicted and under the sting of my pain I said in hot haste, "All men are false"—this being the thing "spoken" to which he refers in the words—"I have spoken."——In favor of the former construction is the Septuagint, quoted by Paul (2 Cor. 4: 13). For the latter is the somewhat common usage of the verb translated "spoken" * to state the abstract fact of speaking, followed by the verb "said" † to introduce the very words spoken. If "I have spoken," in v. 10, does not refer to these words in v. 11, there is nothing to indicate their reference. Besides, the only natural construction of v. 11 gives prominence to the words there spoken as hasty and exceptionable; as opposed to assuming that the main idea lies in the unexpressed antithesis, viz., God only is true. I therefore incline to the latter construction.——The word translated "for"‡ may mean *although*, as in Ps. 49: 18 and Ex. 13: 17.

12. What shall I render unto the LORD *for* all his benefits toward me?

13. I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

14. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

One mercy to be thankful for is the kind forgiveness which blots out and passes over our hot and hasty words. But all God's benefits, who can recount? How they rise up and spread themselves out before the mind of the convalescing man!——What shall he do? In harmony with the beautiful custom of the pious Hebrew, let him go before the great congregation; "take the cup of salvation"—the cup bearing his thank-offering for salvations received—and "call upon the name of the Lord" in grateful acknowledgment and thankful praises, paying the vows which his burdened soul made in the long and bitter hours of his pain and peril.——Exegetically, the main question of the passage turns on the word "cup." It has been commonly applied to an assumed usage of offering a little wine (of course in a "cup") in connection with the Mosaic "peace" or thank-offering. This would be fitly "the cup of salvation" in the sense of the cup of thanksgiving *for* the salvations experienced—in this case from sickness. But Dr. Alexander says, "We read of no such cup in Scripture, and its origin may probably be traced to the rabbinical interpretation of this very passage. Interpreted by Scripture analogies, it simply means—I will accept the portion God allots me. See Ps. 11: 6 and 16: 5."——The evidence for the use of wine in the peace or thank-offering appears in Num. 15: 8–10: "Thou shalt bring for a drink offering half an hin of wine," etc. This relates to "a sacrifice in *performing a vow or*

* דבר † אמר ‡ כי

peace-offering unto the Lord." It really seems of small consequence whether the law specified the word "cup," for a cup to hold wine is a simple necessity.——The construction which Dr. Alexander presents is harsh—*i. e.*, "cup" in the sense of the lot or portion which God gives; for this may be affliction, pain, rather than salvation. Such a sense is too indefinite for this passage and too alien from its scope and spirit. I must adhere to the usual and in my view well established construction of these most beautiful words. ——In v. 14, "now" has no reference to time; but is a particle of entreaty. O let me, I beseech thee, pay my vows in the presence of all the people—it is such a privilege!

15. Precious in the sight of the LORD *is* the death of his saints.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord"—not a matter of small concern, but one of deepest interest, calling out his tenderest pity and sympathy. Ah, indeed, for has not our Jesus felt the pangs of death? Is it not of his own benevolent nature that he should feel every pain of his suffering people, as if it were his own? Verily, "we have not an High Priest who can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," but one who can be, and, indeed, who can not fail to be. So that the chief redeeming feature in the sufferings of Christ's people lies in the manifestations of divine sympathy which Jesus is sure to make to those who abide in him. How often are these sympathies revealed in their fullness and glory to his children as they come near the Jordan of death, and as their feet dip into its waters! To them is given the witness that these words of our Psalm are most true.

16. O LORD, truly I *am* thy servant; I *am* thy servant, *and* the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

The English version here misses the finer touches of feeling, the first word of the verse being a particle of entreaty, and the word for "truly" having the sense of *for*, thus: "Ah Lord, I pray thee—for I am thy servant," etc. The thing sought is implied, not expressed: doubtless God's sparing, restoring mercy.——The strength of these protestations of willing service and hearty devotion to God is to be noticed, the appropriate requital for such and so great mercy. "Thou hast loosed my bonds," the bonds of pain and weakness which held me fast and so near the grave!

17. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

18. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

19. In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

These verses repeat and intensify the leading sentiments of the Psalm. Such sentiments will bear frequent repetition, and the most solemn reiteration.

PSALM CXVII.

1. O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye his people.
2. For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD *endureth* forever. Praise ye the LORD.

This short Psalm looks forth from the one suffering individual, himself a pious Israelite, to the nations of the wide earth. Let all the nations—even all the individual men that make up the nations—praise the Lord; for his merciful loving-kindness is great, even toward them. His great salvation reaches them in its legitimate scope and purpose; the limitless love of the Infinite Father embraces them all, and makes them welcome to the blessings he offers to his obedient worshipers.——It should be noticed that Paul (Rom. 15: 11) read in this Psalm a prophecy of salvation to the Gentile world, and found here in part his authority for giving them the glorious gospel of a crucified and risen Savior. This fact might well be one of the themes of praise for ancient Israel, as also for all the people of God in every age.——This broad outlook of these verses adapts them to the purpose of a *doxology*, to be appended to a much longer song. Perhaps they stand thus by themselves because they were used as a doxology, not for Ps. 116 only, but for various other Psalms.

PSALM CXVIII.

In its adaptation to the circumstances of the restored exiles, this Psalm has strong points of resemblance to Ps. 116. We must date it in the times and scenes historically sketched by Ezra (chap. 6: 16–22); *i. e.*, the dedication of the new temple. True, the allusion (v. 22) to the "chief corner-stone" seems to favor the special reference of the Psalm to the scene of laying the foundation-stone as given historically Ezra 3: 10–13; but over against this, "the opening of the gates" (vs. 19, 20), and the phrase, "We have blessed you out of the house of the Lord," (v. 26), seem to demand a reference to the real dedication of the house.—— That the writer speaks throughout in the singular number as of himself does not exclude the participation of all the people in his song. Rather it was expected that every one would join in the song, making its utterances personal to himself. So the song would become the voice of the whole people.

1. O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: because his mercy *endureth* forever.
2. Let Israel now say, that his mercy *endureth* forever.
3. Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy *endureth* forever.
4. Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy *endureth* forever.

The first vs. gives the key-note of the song.——In vs. 2, 3, 4, the word "now" has no relation to time, but is the same particle of entreaty already noticed (Ps. 116: 14, 18). Its force may be well indicated thus: "O that Israel would say—"His mercy endureth forever," etc.

5. I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, *and set me* in a large place.

What grammarians call the "constructio pregnans" gives beauty and force to the original, somewhat thus: "I cried unto the Lord *out of* my straitness: he answered me *into* largeness"—*i. e.*, his answer brought me forth into a large, ample place.

6. The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?
7. The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see *my desire* upon them that hate me.

Literally, "the Lord is *for* me or *to* me as mine own God.—— What can man, frail man of the earth * do unto me," protected by such a Defender?——"The Lord is *for* me *with* my helpers," and "I shall look upon my haters," *i. e.*, look down upon them fearlessly.

8. *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.
9. *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

Cyrus, king of Persia, had done a noble deed for the exiles of Judah, and this deed was still fresh and precious in their memory; yet even so, it was better to trust in the Lord than in him—aye far better, for really all this help from him was ultimately from the Lord, who "had stirred up his spirit to do this manly deed."

10. All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.
11. They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

* אדם

12. They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

The last clause in each of these three verses has precisely the same Hebrew words. Literally translated, they would read; "In the name of the Lord, *for* I will destroy them." The word representing *for** will bear the sense of "that" as a conjunction. The clause is really difficult. Critics mostly translate "that," and then supply variously, "I declare;" "I swear" [the solemn oath]; "it is;" "it is certain;" or "I trust." I incline to the last named—"I trust in the name of the Lord that I shall destroy them."

13. Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.

By a sudden transition the Psalmist accosts his enemy as present: "Thou hast thrust at me violently, even to make me fall; but the Lord helped me."

14. The LORD *is* my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

15. The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

16. The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

"Voice of *rejoicing*"— a word which means, loud shouts of joy. "And salvation," *i. e.*, the voice of salvation—which is a voice of joy *because of* salvation experienced. This is heard not only in the public assemblies, but at home, in the tents of the righteous. The next phrase, viz., "the right hand of the Lord," etc., may be taken as the very words of this joyful song in praise of the Almighty.——The great event in special view was God's hand uplifted to take them out of their bondage in Babylon and bring them safely home to their father-land. There was abundant reason for magnifying this glorious "right hand."

17. I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

18. The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

"I shall not die," before the enemies of our people, hating and threatening on every side round about; but shall live to testify in praise of God's marvelous works of redemption for his people. My chastening during seventy years of weary bondage has been

sore; but God has spared us from national extinction—*me* (each one of us may say) from personal death.

19. Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, *and* I will praise the LORD:

20. This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.

Why called "gates of righteousness?" Probably because they were the gates for the righteous people to enter, as said in v. 20: the gates of their temple, this being probably the dedication song. See Ezra 6: 16–22.——"I will go into them," so let all the people say in their united song.

21. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

Thou hast heard my uplifted cry for help, even in that land of our bondage. The reader will recall the prayer of Daniel (chap. 9); also the prophetic foreshowings as to their supplications as given (Jer. 29: 10–14), and a specimen of their sorrowful utterances and of God's reply as in Jer. 31: 18–20.

22. The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head-*stone* of the corner.

23. This is the LORD'S doing; it *is* marvelous in our eyes.

V. 22 is doubtless a proverb in current use, in its primary application expressing the case of the Jews as a nation, apparently thrust out by their exile from any place among the nations; but now restored again, and through the great Messiah, soon to become the head-stone of the corner of God's great spiritual temple—Messiah's kingdom being destined to outshine all other kingdoms and long outlast them all. The glory of the Israel of Ezra's day was in itself of small account; but, thought of as having in it the germ of their Messiah's glorious kingdom, the prophetic eye saw it "the head-stone of the corner." It was therefore by no latitude of accommodation and by no forcing of words into other or greater sense than their own, that Jesus found in this passage a definite prophetic allusion to himself and his gospel kingdom—an allusion so forcible and conclusive that each of the first three evangelists bring out the case in full (Mat. 21: 33–46, and Mk. 12: 1–12, and Luke 20: 9–19).——"This," says the Psalmist, "has come to pass of the Lord"—by virtue of his special agencies: He and He alone has done it. We look upon it with admiring wonder!

24. This *is* the day *which* the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

"Day," not in the specific sense of a twenty-four hour period, but in the not infrequent sense, a period or event of peculiar

character, as when we speak of "the day of small things" (Zech. 4: 10) or "a day of wonders." There may possibly be a reference to the dedication day of the new temple, but if so, the thought broadens out to embrace all the great events which culminated in that dedication.——Well do they say, "Let us rejoice and be glad therein."

25. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

26. Blessed *be* he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.

Here also the word "now" expresses not *time* but *entreaty;* best translated, "Save, I pray." These two Hebrew words are transferred [not translated] into our version in "*Hosanna,*" as in Mat. 21: 9, where the multitudes who preceded and followed our Lord in his triumphal entry into Jerusalem seized upon the very words of this passage. No words could have been more appropriate. Of *him* pre-eminently was it said in this prophecy, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." See Mat. 23: 39. "He that should come," the great "coming One," became his special designation, as we see in Mat. 11: 3, and Jn. 6: 14, and 4: 25. Compare also Malachi 3: 1.——If it be asked, How can we suppose an allusion to the Messiah in these words sung at the dedication of the second temple? The answer is that the glory of the restoration of Israel from exile lay in its pledge of the coming Messiah—lay in the fact that the nation had in it the germ of future salvation for the world in the person of the coming Redeemer. But for this, the nation might well enough have sunk into oblivion and been lost in the undistinguished flow of human generations. Hence the light of prophecy gleamed forth afresh under Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, and also here in this Psalm belonging to the same period.——If these words—"Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord" have any primary reference—suppose to some prophet of that age, still it is so weak, so obscure, and so entirely eclipsed by its more manifest and commanding allusion to the great Messiah that there seems little occasion to inquire after it.

27. God *is* the LORD, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, *even* unto the horns of the altar.

The mighty God ["El"] is our "Jehovah," in the sense of our faithful, covenant God; he hath shed upon us this glorious prophetic light as to "Him that cometh in the name of the Lord.' Now, therefore, bind the sacrificial animal with cords and lead him safely up to the horns of the altar. The sense is not—Tie him *to* the horns of the altar, but lead him bound up to the very altar, there to be offered in sacrifice. There is no emphasis on horns as distinct from the altar itself. It is only a poetic definiteness, for the sake of stronger impression.

28. Thou *art* my God, and I will praise thee: *thou art* my God, I will exalt thee.

29. O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

The original for *God* gives force to this passage: Thou art my "*El*"—the Mighty One; therefore will I praise Thee: my "Eloah"—a varied form with substantially the same sense, "and I will extol Thee"—lift Thee high in glory and honor.——The usual doxology closes this precious Psalm:—"O give thanks to Jehovah, for he is good: for his mercy is forever!"

PSALM CXIX.

This Psalm, unique in form, in length, and in subject-matter, treats almost exclusively of the *written word of God*, celebrating, we might say, its praises, unfolding its value and its virtues, and especially its precious relations to the religious experiences of the heart and the life. Comparing it with other Psalms, it finds resemblances in Ps. 1, and might be supposed to have taken Ps. 19: 7–14 for its text.——It should be noted, however, that it does not restrict itself to the preceptive laws of God, nor even to the larger sense of statutes and ordinances; but includes also the historical ways of God in his administration over men:—"Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies."——All the words of Hebrew use, expressing God's will as to man's duty—"law," "statutes," "commandments," "testimonies," "judgments," etc., we shall find with constant repetition and variety, constituting the one grand theme of this wonderful Psalm.——As to date and author; its place in Book V strongly favors its date after the restoration. The brief historical sketches given of Ezra put their finger upon him as [probably] the author. The prominent points in his history are that he was a "priest," and especially "a scribe in the law of Moses;" a *ready* scribe; *i. e.*, trained, skilled, expert; a man who had made this his business and profession; "a scribe of the words of the commandments of the Lord and of his statutes to Israel." Moreover, he was eminently a man of wisdom, of fidelity, of prayer, and of profound sympathy with the spirit of the divine law and with the true interests of God's kingdom. A careful study of his history, as in Ezra 7–10, and Neh. 8, will disclose many of the leading points of character which are unfolded in this Psalm.——The Psalm is constructed in twenty-two sections, indicated by the successive twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Each of the eight verses in each several section begins with the Hebrew letter which gives name to the section. This fullest development of the acrostic principle had for its main purpose to aid the memory—a matter of

great importance when printing was unknown and books were costly and rare.——This Psalm is plain, presenting but few points that require explanation.

1. Blessed *are* the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.

2. Blessed *are* they that keep his testimonies, *and that* seek him with the whole heart.

"O how blessed;" or, "O the blessedness of the men of unblemished life—made thus pure and perfect by obeying the law of the Lord. The blessing comes only to those who study and obey this law *with all the heart.*

3. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

Both verbs are in the past tense. Their record testifies to a pure life; "they *have done* no iniquity, they *have walked* in his ways. It is not enough that they should make professions, or should talk well of their experiences. They must have the record of actual *right living.*

4. Thou hast commanded *us* to keep thy precepts diligently.

5. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

"O that my ways were *directed*"—but the Hebrew word means more than merely instructed, shown in the right way. It signifies *established, confirmed*—a very suitable thing to pray for. He longs to attain fixed, settled habits, in which his ways should, as the word suggests, become *solid* in the right.

6. Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

7. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

8. I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

In v. 6 the emphatic word is "*all.*" The glory of a religious life—that which lifts it to honor and above conscious shame, is the having respect to *all*—not to a selected part only, but to *all* God's commandments.

9. Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

Instead of question and answer both in this one verse, the Hebrew demands the construction with question only, leaving the answer to be inferred from the drift of the entire Psalm—thus: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way to keep it according to thy word?" This translation gives precisely the force of the last clause.——Hebrew punctuation lacks the interrogation

point, so that we have no other clew but the form of the sentence and the sense by which to decide where the question ends.

10. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

11. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.

To "hide in the heart" is not to conceal away even from his own view, but the very opposite: to put it in his memory, where it will be ever present and ready to guide his affections and purposes, and to rule his life.

12. Blessed *art* thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.

What is the connection of thought between these two clauses? Perhaps this: Thou, Lord, art infinitely blessed in thy purity, thy benevolence, in the perfection of thy entire moral nature. O lead me upward to that same moral perfection! It is the noble purpose of thy revealed law to bring thy moral creatures up to thine own standard of purity. O help me to realize this purpose in my heart and life!

13. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

14. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as *much as* in all riches.

15. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

16. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

The expression in v. 14 is strong—as much as in the sum total of all wealth—infinite riches.

17. Deal bountifully with thy servant, *that* I may live, and keep thy word.

Grant blessings upon thy servant, that long as I live I may keep thy word. We must not separate living from keeping God's word so as to make two petitions, one for life and one for obedience, but rather combine the two as above.

18. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

"Open," in its primary sense of uncover, take away all obstructions, *i. e.*, to clear vision.——"And I shall then see," seems more literal and exact. The Hebrew punctuators place a long pause here. Following their direction, we must make the last clause quite a distinct sentence, thus: "Wondrous things are from thy law." They are there, and I shall reach them when I shall search with undimmed vision.

19. I *am* a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

The returning exiles were in a sort strangers even in their father-land, and hence make a special appeal to the compassion of their God whose ancient statutes evinced such sympathy for "the stranger."

20. My soul breaketh for the longing *that it hath* unto thy judgments at all times.

The words express most ardent desire. But "judgments" must not be restricted to retributive visitations, but should include God's precepts, as in v. 19, as well as inflictions of evil upon the wicked.

21. Thou hast rebuked the proud *that are* cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

22. Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.

23. Princes also did sit *and* speak against me: *but* thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

24. Thy testimonies also *are* my delight, *and* my counselors.

In v. 22 the words, "Roll away reproach and contempt," may be taken from Josh. 5: 9; but the thing thought of is probably the reproach and scorn which the feeble colony experienced from their wicked, insolent neighbors.——The last clause of v. 24 has it, "The men of my counsel." The testimonies as to his will, which God had given in his word, were as so many bosom friends to give him counsel.

25. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

"Cleaveth to the dust," might express extreme humiliation; or, by a common Hebrew usage, drawing nigh to the grave, as in Ps. 22: 29. The prayer that follows for renewed life-power favors the latter sense.——"According to thy word, *i. e.*, of promise.

26. I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

The word "declare" has some shades of meaning not true to the original here. The sense is: I have laid my case before thee, *i. e.*, in prayer, and thou hast answered me"—answer rather than "hear" being the sense of the last verb.

27. Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

"So will I *muse, meditate* upon thy wondrous works"—is a more exact translation than "talk." It is also more useful toward one's spiritual health and life.

28. My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

29. Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law graciously.

30. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid *before me.*

"Remove from me the way of lying"—a prayer to be saved from that sin—to be kept far aloof from that way of life.

31. I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD put me not to shame.

32. I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

"Stuck," though almost vulgar, is in no wise obscure.——The last clause of v. 32 were better read, "For thou wilt enlarge my heart."——According to the oriental ideas of straightness and largeness (see 118: 5) we might conceive of this enlargement as consisting in conscious freedom and ease in the ways of piety. Thou wilt make it sweet and easy to run in the way of thy commands. See v. 45 below and notes there.

33. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it *unto* the end.

34. Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart.

"Give me understanding" is not a prayer for more intellect, nor for more knowledge in general; but for more knowledge of God's word. "Cause me to understand" [it], "so shall I keep thy law"—law being what he would fain understand.

35. Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

36. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

The prayer "Incline not my heart to covetousness" is of the same sort with this: "Lead us not into temptation," which by no means implies that God ever tempts men to evil (James 1: 13), but only that we have occasion to beg his help to withstand such temptation.

37. Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; *and* quicken thou me in thy way.

38. Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who *is devoted* to thy fear.

"Vanity," in Hebrew usage has often special reference to idols and the accompaniments of idol worship. The Psalmist prays that he may never be permitted even to see such tempting ob

jects.——In v. 38 "word" refers to promise, "established" when fulfilled.——In the last clause, the best critics suppose the word for "fear" to be used in the sense of *fearers*, thus: Confirm unto thy servant thy promise which is for thy fearers—given to those that fear thee. Others thus: Which promise is attached to the fear of thee, *i. e.*, pledged to holy obedience.

39. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments *are* good.

40. Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

"Thy judgments are good;" why then should they fall on thy faithful servant? Yet I have cause to fear reproach: I pray thee in equity, let it pass over from me and come upon those who deserve it.

41. Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, *even* thy salvation, according to thy word.

42. So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

43. And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

In v. 42 there is a play upon the two senses of the term "word," thus: "And I will answer my revilers a word, for I have trusted in thy word." Having trusted in thy word of promise, I shall have a word of reply to make to them when thou shalt graciously hear this prayer.——"Take not thy word of truth" (*i. e.*, of promise) out of my mouth; let me have it still to speak of before my enemies and to rest upon for my own soul. If God were to fail in fulfilling this word of promise, it would, in the sense here contemplated, be quite taken out of his mouth.

44. So shall I keep thy law continually forever and ever.

45. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

"Walk at liberty;" literally, walk *in a large place*—a broad and easy path, God graciously fulfilling to me his promises, and my soul made strong and my steps guided wisely in his perfect way.

46. I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

47. And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

48. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

"Speak of thy testimonies before kings" meets the case of Ezra (7: 1–27, and 8: 22), also of Nehemiah (2: 3–8).——"Lifting up the hands unto God's commandments" indicates the joyous heartiness with which he would seek and obey them.

49. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

50. This *is* my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

Remember that specific promise of thine, O Lord, by which thou didst inspire my hope. But some critics give the verse a mere general construction, thus: "Remember the word spoken to thy servant, for thou hast raised my hope." The former seems more life-like, and being grammatically admissible, should be preferred. ——"This has been" [better than "*is*"] "my comfort under my affliction," etc. Having had sweet experience in this line, I look to thee for yet more.

51. The proud have had me greatly in derision: *yet* have I not declined from thy law.

52. I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

Outsiders scoffed at the builders of the city walls. See Neh. 2: 19, and 4: 4. Also Ps. 123: 3, 4.——The scoffs of the proud have never tempted me from obeying thy law. Under such sharp temptations, I have thought of thy judgments all along the past ages, and so have comforted myself and have sustained my faith in thee. Those ancient "judgments" include all the manifestations of God in retribution, whether of evil upon the wicked or of good to the righteous.

53. Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

54. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

"Horror"—the Hebrew word being very strong—hot indignation, a burning in my very soul—hath seized upon me because of the wicked forsaking thy law. So far from feeling as they do, thy statutes have been the theme of my song in the house of my sojournings even in the desolate land of my Chaldean bondage.

55. I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

56. This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

"Thy name," as usual, all those qualities of character expressed by the word "name." I have recalled to mind in my night meditations, and *so*, consequently, under their influence have I kept thy law. So fitly and sweetly the pious mind turns its thought to God in the stillness of the night-watches and finds itself sustained in keeping God's law. Such experiences are at least as ancient as Job, for in him we read—"But none [of the wicked] saith, Where is God, my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" (35:

10).——This hath been my experience, saith the Psalmist, "because I kept thy precepts."

57. *Thou art* my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.

"Portion," not, probably, in the sense of my chosen good; viz., God himself; but rather this: My function, my part, my accepted duty, O Lord, [I have said] is to *keep thy word.* Observe that the words "Thou art" are not in the original.

58. I entreated thy favor with *my* whole heart; be merciful unto me according to thy word.

"I entreated thy favor"—translates a very peculiar Hebrew verb, having the primary sense to stroke or smooth down the face, but used in the secondary sense of conciliating one's good will.

59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

60. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

"I thought," meditated deeply, pondered upon my past life, and then turned—as the Hebrew verb suggests, in the active sense, *caused* my feet to turn unto thy testimonies. This might be called a metaphysical statement of genuine, thoughtful conversion. It is described yet more fully in the next verse: "I made haste to keep thy commandments," and permitted no dangerous, sinful delay.

61. The bands of the wicked have robbed me: *but* I have not forgotten thy law.

"The bands"—the Hebrew word having usually the sense of *cords*, but admitting the sense of a file of men, a band or troop—the probable sense here.——"Have environed," not "robbed," with some allusion to the case of the exiled people in Babylon. But even amid such perils I have not forgotten thy law.

62. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.

"Righteous judgments"—in the broad sense repeatedly noticed above—all God's manifestations in his retributive providence toward either the wicked or the righteous. In the deep night-seasons I will rise from my bed to give myself with the more fulness to thaksgiving and praise for thy great works in past ages. How admirable thus to sustain one's faith in God and enkindle the deepest, purest devotion!

63. I *am* a companion of all *them* that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

64. The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

"Companion," not loosely associated but most intimately. I am firmly knit together in heart with all who fear thee.——That God's goodness so fills the earth (see v. 12), shining forth throughout all the ages in the history of man and revealing itself every-where in the face of nature, moves the Psalmist to the most intense desire to be taught his will respecting man's duty. O how I long to be conformed to the perfect will of One so infinitely good!

65. Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

66. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

Literally, "Teach me goodness of judgment and knowledge," *i. e.*, the very best of their kind, such as thy word imparts.—— "For I have confidence in thy word;" I believe it to be from a perfect God, and therefore containing perfect wisdom and knowledge. Coming to thee with such faith in thee and in thy word, and with such longings to be taught of thee, thou wilt not thrust me away!

67. Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

"Was going astray" a sadly uniform experience with me; but ever since, I have kept thy word—a precious testimony to the wisdom and love of the Great Father in his corrective chastisements of his children—one to which thousands on thousands would readily subscribe their personal assent. This truth was signally exemplified in the Jews as a nation before and after the affliction of their great captivity.

68. Thou *art* good and doest good: teach me thy statutes.

Here again we meet with the tacit inference, so beautiful morally, that God being benevolent, full of that goodness which delights in doing good, therefore we may surely trust him to teach us his statutes for the purpose of molding us into his own moral image, and so securing to us the highest blessedness possible.

69. The proud have forged a lie against me: *but* I will keep thy precepts with *my* whole heart.

70. Their heart is as fat as grease; *but* I delight in thy law.

"Forged" well expresses the thought of the original—though *patched up* gives more exactly the figure involved in the word. They make up lies, drawing upon their imagination or invention, with no trouble about the facts. But such falsehoods shall not swerve me from uprightness. I give my whole heart none the less to the keeping of all thy precepts.——The restored exiles had just this annoyance from the Samaritans and other adjacent tribes. ——"Their heart fat," *i. e.*, dead as to moral sensibility and alto

gether alien from God through their pride. So "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked" against God's authority (Deut. 32: 15). See also Job 15: 27, and Ps. 17; 10, and 73: 7.

71. *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

72. The law of thy mouth *is* better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

The affliction of the whole captive people in Chaldea was their national salvation, radically curing them of their inveterate propensity to idols, and bringing them to thorough repentance before God. The same law obtains toward individuals all down through the ages. Who has not drank the bitter cup of affliction, to learn thereby that, though bitter, it was spiritually tonic and restoring to the soul? No amount of gold and silver could work such spiritual cures—could so marvelously save the soul from death and bring the wanderer back to God.

73. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.

As thy hand and thine only has made and shaped my body—the material part of my nature—so let thy hand fashion my mind with knowledge and my heart in the moral sense with piety through thy word and Spirit.

74. They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

75. I know, O LORD, that thy judgments *are* right, and *that* thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

76. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

77. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law *is* my delight.

The same confidence in God's wisdom and love in afflicting his people which we saw above (vs. 67, 71) appears here also, looking back, we must suppose, to the nation's experience in their recent captivity, yet covering the personal experience of all the true children of God; for "what son is he whom his father chasteneth not?" (Heb. 12: 5–11).

78. Let the proud be ashamed: for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: *but* I will meditate in thy precepts.

"Be ashamed"—be put to shame for their wickedness. May God confound their schemes; frustrate their plans so that they shall be filled with confusion!

79. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

80. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

"Turn unto me." Though they may have lost confidence in me, yet let them see that thy favor and love are toward me, and come back to embrace me as thy child again.——Let my heart be sound in thy statutes: so I shall never, like the wicked, be confounded and put to shame.

81. My soul fainteth for thy salvation: *but* I hope in thy word.

82. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke: *yet* do I not forget thy statutes.

"Fainteth for thy salvation"—wearied and exhausted with longing and waiting for it.——"Mine eyes *fail*," the same word which in v. 81 is translated "faint;" *i. e.*, mine eyes are dim and almost blind with looking and longing for the fulfillment of thy words of promise.——Bottles in the East were made of skins of animals, dried, and in the case supposed here, over the fire and in the smoke—of course wrinkled and blackened. His long protracted grief and trials gave him such a look.

84. How many *are* the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?

85. The proud have digged pits for me, which *are* not after thy law.

How long have I to live? Alas, lest I may not live to see my cause vindicated as against my enemies, and myself delivered from their oppressions!——The proud who are reckless of thy law, and have no thought of ordering their life by it.——The frequent recurrence in this Psalm of deep complaints against persecuting enemies gives us a strong impression of the annoyance and trial experienced by the restored Jews from their hostile neighbors. It will be remembered that this opposition arrested the building of the temple after the foundations were laid (Ezra 3–6) in the second year of Cyrus, so that it was not completed until the sixth year of Darius—an interval of some eighteen years. No wonder this should seem sadly long to those who loved God's law and worship as ardently as the writer of this Psalm.

86. All thy commandments *are* faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.

87. They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

88. Quicken me after thy loving-kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

"Almost consumed me upon the earth" or land, for the word is used in either sense. "Consumed" is the word applied (vs. 81, 82) to his "soul" and his "eyes" as being wasted away under his long affliction.——"Quicken," *i. e.*, enliven, give me fresh life; renew my faith, and re-invigorate thereby my wasted body, for the word may well apply to both body and soul.

89. Forever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

90. Thy faithfulness *is* unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

91. They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all *are* thy servants.

Thy word is, as it were, anchored to thy throne, made fast and sure where no such changes as those of earth and earthly things can ever reach it. Hence it is safe to say, Thy faithfulness extends to all generations; no lapse of time, no passing away of human generations can weaken its stability. Just as thou hast made the earth fast and it abideth, so are thy promises made fast and sure and will abide to the end.——This comparison of God's faithfulness in promise to the eternal stability of the heavenly bodies appears repeatedly in the Hebrew scriptures. See Jer. 31: 35–37, and 33: 20, 21, 25, 26, and Ps. 89: 33–37.——In v. 91, "they"—the earth and the heavenly bodies, continue to-day according to thine appointments, for "all," (Hebrew) "*the* all," *i. e.*, the whole material universe, are thy servants, held for evermore to thy bidding. The tacit inference is, will not the great God whose works evince such stability, such fixedness of purpose, abide true to his promises given to his people?

92. Unless thy law *had been* my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

93. I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

"Will never forget thy precepts;" but manifestly in this connection the original word includes *promise*, and not law only.

94. I *am* thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

"I am thine," devoted to thy service, consciously committed to thy care: and canst thou now forsake me? I have sought to know and do thy will; and moreover I have heard thy promises and have believed and trusted in them; and now, shall they fail me?

95. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: *but* I will consider thy testimonies.

In all this danger from wicked men plotting my destruction, I

resort to thy testimonies, and strive to comprehend their signifi cance, and to encourage my soul therein.

96. I have seen an end of all perfection: *but* thy commandment *is* exceeding broad.

"I have seen an end of all perfection" *elsewhere;* no human thing is perfect; but thy law is absolute perfection; thy revealed word is complete, broad, deep, rich, meeting every requirement of human want. Here, as throughout this context, "commandment," "precept," "law," etc., are to be taken in the comprehensive sense, including God's entire revelation, promise no less than precept.——Moreover the context here seems to direct the thought in this verse rather to the perfection of God's law than to the perfection of the writer's relation to it. His own imperfection, whether of faith in God's promises, or of obedience to his precepts, seems to be foreign from the scope of the context, so that we can not reasonably suppose he is speaking of either.

97. O how love I thy law! it *is* my meditation all the day.

The one feature, prominent in this Psalm above every other, appears in its strength here—*the love of God's law*—a love at once sincere, deep, strong, quenchless, effective upon the activities of the mind since it prompts to continual study of the law—effective also upon his purposes of life, since it controls his life absolutely and universally.——If we are asked to give a reasonable account for such love of God's law, we need only say—It deserves to be loved for its perfect purity and for its infinite rectitude and fitness; it justly claims this honor as coming from our beneficent Father; it rightly commands our heart's love and appreciation as God's own means of restoring human souls to his perfect moral image. What higher reasons for loving any law can be even conceived? Ask one who is humbly conscious of such love for God's law and of such longing for personal holiness in conformity with its spirit, and he will testify that no aspirations seem to him so reasonable; that none other can be so blessed to himself; that nothing else so perfectly commends itself to his convictions. He only wishes this love were stronger and its fruits in his heart and life more abiding and more absolutely controlling.

98. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they *are* ever with me.

99. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies *are* my meditation.

100. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

Thus the Psalmist celebrates God's law as the fountain of all wisdom. He who studies it intensely—no matter if almost exclusively—soon goes beyond his teachers, surpassing in wise under

standing even the ancients. For God's written word was even then progressive, the new chapters giving a decided advantage to the modern student over the ancient.——But especially let the reader note the conditions precedent to this surpassing proficiency in the study of God's law, viz., because "thy commandments are ever with me;" because "they are my meditation;" because "I keep thy precepts."——V. 99 may look toward the sad corruption which manifested itself even in the priesthood in those times (Ezra. 10: 18, and Neh. 13: 4–7, 28, 29).

101. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

102. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Of course there can be no keeping of God's law without this absolute refraining from evil ways. Holy ways and sinning ways can never have fellowship together.——"Judgments" (v. 102) must include God's decisions as to man's duty, *i. e.*, precepts, as well as penal inflictions.

103. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! *yea, sweeter* than honey to my mouth.

104. Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

Such deep and yearning love for God's law makes even its words sweet. Precious associations cluster about them; they are music to the ear; honey to the tongue; beauty on the page. They give the best of understanding, viz., that which makes us hate and shun every false way.

105. Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Human *life* in the moral sense being often thought of as a "way," a "path," the figure which compares God's law to a lamp for the night and to sunlight for the day, is at once true to nature and full of beauty.

106. I have sworn, and I will perform *it*, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

"Will perform," but the Hebrew is strictly, *confirm;* make it *stand.* The sentiment of the verse suggests the wisdom of renewing our consecration, but especially of ratifying it continually in the actual life.

107. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

108. Accept, I beseech thee, the free-will offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

"The free-will offerings of my mouth;" *prayers* and *praises*, here tacitly compared to the thank-offerings and the voluntary (not specially prescribed) offerings under the Mosaic ritual.——"Teach me thy judgments"—a point never lost sight of.

109. My soul *is* continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

110. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.

To put one's soul or life in the hand is to expose it to specially imminent danger. The phrase is sufficiently explained in such passages as Judg. 12: 3, and 1 Sam. 19: 5, and 28: 21.

111. Thy testimonies have I taken as a heritage forever: for they *are* the rejoicing of my heart.

112. I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes always *even unto* the end.

"As an heritage"—as my inheritance, with some historic reference to Canaan as promised to the patriarchs and their posterity.

113. I hate *vain* thoughts: but thy law do I love.

Instead of "vain thoughts," this rare Hebrew word seems to mean—men of wavering, uncertain opinions; perhaps skeptics.

114. Thou *art* my hiding-place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

115. Depart from me, ye evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

"Depart from me, evil-doers;" I need not your sympathy; I repel your society, for I propose to obey God.

116. Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.

117. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

In conscious moral weakness he casts himself upon divinely promised help—most wisely!

118. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit *is* falsehood.

"Trodden down," should rather be *despised*, lightly esteemed. Such characters deserve to be held in dishonor, disgrace.

119. Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth *like* dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.

The wicked of the earth are in society only as the dross to the genuine silver. God should have our thanks for his purifying

work. It is remarkable that even from such a sentiment the Psalmist glides to the same almost constant result; "Therefore I love thy testimonies."

120. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

A keen sense of God's judgments on the wicked impresses a salutary fear of incurring his displeasure. Would it not be fearful to fall under the judgments of such a hand?

121. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.

As I have done right toward my fellow-men, leave me not to be wronged by them. The right which I have done to them, insure thou to me from thyself in return.

122. Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

The sense of this verb "*Be surety for*" appears in the case of Judah in behalf of his brother Benjamin (Gen. 43: 9, and 44: 32). The Psalmist prays that the Lord would stand his surety and guarantee, his safety against proud oppressors.

123. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

124. Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

125. I *am* thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

"Fail for"—in the sense, long for, almost exhausted with protracted waiting.——"The word of thy righteousness," thy righteous word, promising righteous dealing from a righteous God.

126. *It is* time for *thee,* LORD, to work: *for* they have made void thy law.

"Time for thee," Lord, *to do something*, to exert thy power and retrieve thy cause, for men are annulling thy law—not only violating it themselves but breaking down its influence and making it of no account. A strong appeal; often appropriate in this rebellious world!——A sad case of making void God's law appear in the history of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 10: and Neh. 13).

127. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

128. Therefore I esteem all *thy* precepts concerning all *things to be* right; *and* I hate every false way.

The word "therefore" most probably is logically related, not to the one verse immediately preceding but to the general drift of

thought in the Psalm; as if to say—For all these reasons I love thy commandments more than gold.

129. Thy testimonies *are* wonderful; therefore doth my soul keep them.

"Wonderful;" full of the wonders of wisdom; the wonders of power; the wonders of love. Good reason this why my soul should hold them continually in thought and affection that they may mold my heart and life into the divine image.

130. The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple.

The word translated "entrance" has more exactly the sense of opening, unfolding. Thy word of truth, thus opened, unfolded to the mind, enlightens it.——The "simple" are the docile, the simple-hearted, who honestly desire to know the truth, with a heart willing and joyful to obey.

131. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

Like one in the agonies of thirst, panting for cool, refreshing waters.

132. Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

133. Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

It has been God's method to bless those who love his name, a fact which inspires hope and encourages prayer.

134. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.

135. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

"Make thy face to shine upon thy servant;" *i. e.*, not only show me thy face, but let it *shine*, expressing not aversion, not displeasure, but merciful compassion, pitying love. Teach me how to live so that thy face may shine upon me evermore.

136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.

The same state of heart which loves God's law intensely, and which perpetually cries, "Teach me thy law"—help me to keep it in all points with all my heart—is of course grieved exceedingly because multitudes do not keep but recklessly break it.——This tender, weeping spirit appears conspicuously in the record of Ezra (9: 3–5, and 10: 1). The people of Israel and even the priests had intermarried with idolaters; "and when I heard this

thing" (he writes) "I rent my garments and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished."——"At evening sacrifice I fell upon my knees and spread out my hands unto the Lord my God and said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee my God:" and farther (10: 1), "When Ezra had prayed and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men, and women, and children; for the people wept very sore."

137. Righteous *art* thou, O LORD, and upright *are* thy judgments.

138. Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* righteous and very faithful.

139. My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

140. Thy word *is* very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

141. I *am* small and despised: *yet* do not I forget thy precepts.

"My zeal hath consumed me," witnesses to the same tender compassion for sinners, blended with deep indignation toward sin, of which this Psalm presents so many expressions.——"Thy word is very *pure*,"—the term being borrowed from the smelting of ores to obtain the precious metals in their pure state. God's word is comparable to the purest silver or gold well refined.

142. Thy righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness, and thy law *is* the truth.

143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me; *yet* thy commandments *are* my delights.

144. The righteousness of thy testimonies *is* everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live.

Thy "righteousness" preserves its character forever with no deterioration; with no change. In my extreme distress, I find abiding delight in thy commandments. My relation to my God as his obedient child never fails to comfort me.

145. I cried with *my* whole heart; hear me, O LORD; I will keep thy statutes.

146. I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

147. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

148. Mine eyes prevent the *night* watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

The word for "prevented" means either to *come before* or to *be beforehand*; *i. e.*, to *come* into one's presence, or to *be in advance* of something. The former sense should probably be given to the word in v. 147 (as in Ps. 95: 2); I come before God with the dawn of morning—as soon as the dawn appears. But in the next verse—Mine eyes *anticipated* the night-watches; I was beforehand with them, meditating upon thy word and offering my prayer before they arrived.

149. Hear my voice according unto thy loving-kindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

Hear me in the spirit of thy loving-kindness, as in the exercise of thy great love thou art wont to hear the suppliant's cry.

150. They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

151. Thou *art* near, O LORD; and all thy commandments *are* truth.

152. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them forever.

The mischief-makers are near to me but far from thy law. That they are so near causes my danger and calls forth this prayer for thy help. But thou too art near, thou as well as they; and hence my hope.

153. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

154. Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

155. Salvation *is* far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

The underlying assumption is that the Great Father will certainly care for his obedient and trustful children, but not for the rebellious. The Psalmist pleads that he is one of the former class, and virtually begs that he may not receive the lot of the latter.

156. Great *are* thy tender mercies, O LORD; quicken me according to thy judgments.

157. Many *are* my persecutors and mine enemies; *yet* do I not decline from thy testimonies.

158. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

The fact that my persecutors are so many has not tempted me away from thy testimonies. I saw those perfidious traitors, enemies against God, and was "grieved," says the English version; but the Hebrew makes it stronger; I was filled with *loathing*; I felt sick and disgusted at heart with their conduct toward God.

159. Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy loving-kindness.

160. Thy word *is* true *from* the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments *endureth* forever.

"Consider *that* I love thy precepts," etc.; fail not to note this fact and to treat me accordingly.——In v. 160, the Hebrew word translated "From the beginning," seems to mean simply, the *head* or the *sum total*, thus: The sum of thy word is truth; all is true. The English translators probably assumed an antithesis between the first clause and the last, thus: Thy word is true from the first; thy judgments endure unto the last, forever. The original does not express this antithesis.

161. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

162. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

163. I hate and abhor lying: *but* thy law do I love.

Under the persecution of the great I have feared not them but thee. My fear of thy word has kept me from undue anxiety because of their hostile bearing, and also from unhallowed resentment.——I hate, I abhor lying; but thy word is perfect truth, infinite sincerity; O how I love it for these qualities!

164. Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.

165. Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

"Seven times"—never so many; an indefinite but large number.——"Nothing shall offend them"—cause them to stumble; become a stumbling-block; for they are preserved from strong temptation, or with every temptation a counteracting help appears and God delivers.

166. LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

The first clause expresses the aspiration of his soul; the second, his performance of the conditions of success. He hopes for salvation, and to gain it, observes God's commandments—which is the only rational way. If any man wishes the Lord to save him, let him follow the Lord's directions.

167. My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

168. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies; for all my ways *are* before thee.

This oft-repeated avowal of his obedience he makes in all sin-

cerity, remembering that his whole life and all the depths of his heart are ever more before God's eye.

169. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

170. Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

171. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

In v. 171, read—"My lips shall pour forth praise, *for* thou wilt teach me thy statutes." I am confident of having this occasion for praise because thou wilt certainly teach me.

172. My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments *are* righteousness.

"My tongue shall answer thy word [saying] *that* all thy commandments are righteous," or, "*for* all thy commandments are right—the former to be preferred as harmonizing better with the verb to *answer* in the first clause.

173. Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

174. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law *is* my delight.

175. Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.

176. I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.

The Psalmist closes here with comprehensive statements which sum up the great points expanded in detail in the body of the Psalm.——In v. 176 the "lost sheep" represents (probably) rather suffering than sin. I have been lost as a perishing sheep—one ready to die: O seek and bring me home, "for I have not forgotten" [preter tense] "thy commandments."——Thus ends this rich and wonderful Psalm. It is pleasant to think how many thousands of God's people in every age since it was written have read its words, refreshed and quickened in every holy aspiration of faith in God's promise, of love for his word and of delight in his character. The humble, afflicted saint who wrote it might well rejoice that through God's blessing, the words God moved him to write have brought in such a harvest of the fruits of righteousness.

PSALM CXX.

A series of fifteen Psalms commences here (120–134) which are styled respectively "A song of degrees." Much critical labor

has been expended upon this word "degrees," * yet with very diverse conclusions as to its meaning. The question has too little real importance to justify an elaborate discussion in this volume. Its importance is the less because the date and real authority of these captions hang in doubt.——Passing the rejected theories, I fully accept the view advocated by Hengstenberg, Alexander, and many others as to the sense, viz., *songs of the upgoings, i. e.*, songs prepared to be sung by the exiles returning from Babylon to Jerusalem, and also subsequently on their stated journeys going up to the holy city to attend the three great annual festivals. This theory accounts well, both for the leading thoughts and also for the local allusions found in these Psalms. The thoughts meet the case of the restored Jews and their re-established temple worship. This noun [ascents or upgoings] and its verb are used repeatedly for these *goings up;* the presence of the article [*the* ascents] favors its definite reference to some well known and established journeys like these; the oldest of these songs (Ps. 122) contains these very words, naturally suggestive of the sense of this title: "Let us *go* into the house of the Lord" (v. 1); "whither the tribes *go up*," etc. (v. 4); and finally, such circumstantial allusions as appear (Ps. 121: 1) show that they were approaching the holy city: "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help."——Turning to the Psalm immediately before us, we may notice how aptly it portrays the condition of the restored exiles, *e. g.*, Zerubbabel and Jeshua, Ezra and Nehemiah, prosecuting the great work of rebuilding the temple and city; harassed by malign and lying enemies who misrepresented and traduced them before the Persian court; compelled them to desist from their enterprise, and caused them long and most vexatious delays and immense trouble. The feelings of those godly men are brought out in this Psalm.

1. In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.
2. Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, *and* from a deceitful tongue.

This is their testimony. In their distress to whom should they go but to the Lord, their own Jehovah? Nehemiah (4: 4–9) gives us testimony to this effect; viz., that while Sanballat was wroth and Tobiah the Ammonite scoffed and taunted, he lifted up his prayer—"Hear, O our God, for we are despised," etc. (v. 4); "We made our prayer unto our God" (v. 9).

3. What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?
4. Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

What retribution is due to thee, false, lying man? Himself makes answer—"Sharp arrows of the mighty warrior, with coals

* המעלות

of juniper"—a plant of the desert, reputed the best material for charcoal—supposed to be the genista, a species of broom. The idea is—sharp arrows and burning coals are their deserved punishment.

5. Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, *that* I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

Alas for me that I am destined to live among such wicked men!——The name "Meshech" is associated (Ezek. 27: 13) with Javan and Tubal, and (Ezek. 38: 2, 3) with Gog and Tubal; in both cases representing the savage, brutal hordes of Northern Asia: while "Kedar" in like manner represents the rude people of the Southern Arabian desert.——"Not dwell *in* the tents of Kedar" but *with*, *i. e.*, among, in the midst of, such savage, godless tribes. Yet probably these names are to be taken as representing their character rather than as indicating the precise nationality of their enemies, as the terms "Vandal" and "Cossack" are sometimes used in our age.

6. My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.
7. I *am for* peace: but when I speak, they *are* for war.

"My soul"—for I myself; yet with the implied thought that dwelling among such haters of peace was a bitter grief to his very soul.——"I am peace"—all peace, in the strong words of the original, but when I speak with them of peace, in soothing words and a conciliatory spirit, they are full of war. Such is the contrast between my spirit and theirs! Think of the trial of living among such neighbors! Such was the very trial of the restored exiles, living between and among Samaritans, Ammonites, Edomites—all barbarous, godless, and intensely hostile to the Jews.

PSALM CXXI.

This Psalm naturally follows Ps. 120. That has the tone of distress, solicitude, trouble, as of one looking forth anxiously for relief. This brings the promise of all desired relief and protection.——The caption [in Hebrew] varies slightly from the normal form, being not, as usual, "a song *of* the ascents," but *for* the ascents, *i. e.*, adapted to be sung by parties going up to the holy city. The other form, however, has essentially the same meaning. ——The first verse suggests that this song would be appropriate just when they came in sight of the sacred summits.

1. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
2. My help *cometh* from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

The last clause of v. 1 is, by Hebrew usage of the words, inter

rogative, with a pause preceding, thus: "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills: Whence shall my help come?" Then v. 2 gives the answer, viz., "From Jehovah, Maker of heaven and earth"—abundantly able therefore to protect and help his trustful people to the extent of their utmost wants. Who can be more mighty than he, the Great Maker of earth and heaven?

3. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

4. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

"Let him not suffer thy foot to be moved," *i. e.*, to slide from its proper place—a very appropriate specification of danger to the foot-traveling pilgrim over the rocky ways of the hills and ravines of Palestine.——It should be noted that v. 3 is prayer, not affirmation; while v. 4 is promise, assurance: "Let him not suffer; let him not slumber;" but v. 4; "Behold, He, the Keeper of Israel, will not slumber," etc.——Nehemiah in his history of his times (4: 7–23) suggests that their faith was coupled with works, for "we made our prayer unto our God [first], and also set a watch against them day and night because of them" [a specimen of their works].

5. The LORD *is* thy keeper: the LORD *is* thy shade upon thy right hand.

6. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

"The Lord thy shade," throwing over thee the grateful shelter which thou mayest need. "At thy right hand" follows the usual conception of friendly help. This shade will avert the sun-stroke in the heats of day, and whatever malarious or otherwise harmful influences may imperil you by night. There is no occasion to assume that the Scriptures indorse the notion of noxious influence from the moon itself. Night, with or without moon, brings more or less that is noxious, and the form of the expression here may be otherwise accounted for without supposing any indorsement of human superstitions about the moon.

7. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

8. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

"Thy going out and thy coming in"—equivalent to the entire activities and exposures of human life. The phrase takes form from the habits of laborers, going out for the day; coming in for the night.——"From this time forth and even for evermore," manifestly looks onward beyond the bound of this earthly life. The writer might have said—Through all your days; long as you live;

but he did not say that merely, but that first and much more; even through the long forever which is the inheritance of all whom God has made in his own image.

PSALM CXXII.

This Psalm, full of the sweet inspirations of love for the house of the Lord and for the scenes of worship there, is one of the "songs of the ascents"—every thought and sentiment in it being adapted to the case of Hebrew families joyfully setting forth on their stated pilgrimage to the holy city to join in the prescribed worship of stated festivals. It is ascribed to David as the author. This view is supported by the reference to "the tribes," as if they were all then in the habit of going up; and by the compactness of the city which was solidly built by David, but in the age of the restoration was small and thinly peopled. Somewhat against the theory that David wrote the Psalm is the use of the peculiar idiom which abbreviates the relative answering to *which*, so as to write fully only its middle consonant. The simple facts in regard to this idiom are that it is not found in the first forty-one Psalms, [Book I], nor in the Psalms of David which appear in Book II, and occurs only in very rare instances in the Hebrew written before the exile, but becomes somewhat common afterward. The problem of its appearance here in a Psalm written by David is solved if we may assume that the scribes of the age of Ezra in revising the Psalm for use in their times allowed themselves to introduce this form as being then more common and more acceptable.—— The tone of the Psalm was admirable for the times of the restoration when the religious life of the colonists was energized and needed to be by the solemnities of their newly restored and lovely Zion.

1. I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

2. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

"When they said" is not the exact grammatical construction of the original, but rather this: "I rejoiced *with* those who said, let us go," etc. I rejoiced *as* they did, in a common sympathy. All our hearts were glad together. It was a joyful day when the word went round—"Let us go up to the house of the Lord and to the holy city!——Not, "our feet *shall* stand," as if the words were spoken prospectively as they left their homes; but our feet *are standing*—have already been planted within thy gates, O Jerusalem; for they are now already there, or, at least, suppose themselves to be.

3. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together

4. Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

5. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

The pilgrims are impressed with the magnificence of the city, which some of them perhaps have entered for the first time.——"Unto the testimony of Israel," would be more intelligible if translated as it should be—according to the law or ordinance for Israel—with reference to the national statute which required all the males of Israel to appear at the holy place three times each year. See particularly Deut. 16: 16, and Ex. 23: 17, and 34: 23. This word rendered "testimony" has often the sense of statutes. ——"Thrones for judgment," the civil law as well as religious being administered there.

6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

7. Peace be within thy walls, *and* prosperity within thy palaces.

8. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace *be* within thee.

9. Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.

"Peace," in the broad sense of general prosperity. "For the sake of my brethren and friends, O let me say, Peace be within thee." The word "now" does not mean time, but only entreaty, expressing prayer more intensely—O let me say, Be thy peace great! Let peace always abide in this dear Zion! Because God's house is here, my prayer shall ascend for blessings on this city of his abode.——The social element in the ancient Hebrew worship is noticeable and delightful: *For the sake of my brethren and friends* let me pray for perpetual blessings on our Zion!

PSALM CXXIII.

This Psalm appositely fits the case of the returned exiles, experiencing the keenest insult and contempt from their Samaritan neighbors. There is no need of looking elsewhere for its date or occasion.——It makes two main points: *How* we lift up our eyes unto the Great Lord above, and *why;* under what stress of trial, viz, the reproach and scorn which fills and oppresses our souls. The infant colony was feeble; their enemies strong, and as the history shows, very insulting, *e. g.*, saying of the people, "What do these feeble Jews?" and of the city walls they were rebuilding: "If a fox go up he shall even break down their stone-

wall" (Neh. 4: 1–3). The history records that this contempt brought them to God in prayer: "Hear, O our God, for we are despised," etc. The Psalm before us develops their feelings yet more fully.

1. Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2. Behold, as the eyes of servants *look* unto the hand of their masters, *and* as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes *wait* upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

"Lifting up the eye unto God" is one of the most natural indications of prayer, one which appears often in the Psalms.——Beautifully God is addressed as one dwelling, or as the Hebrew suggests, *sitting enthroned* in the heavens.——The servant's eye directed continually to the hand of his master suggests the twofold relation of dependence and of service. The servant looks up hopefully for all needed help, waiting also for continually recurring intimations of the master's will as to service. So our eye is unto God.

3. Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

4. Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, *and* with the contempt of the proud.

"Exceedingly filled with contempt"—the Hebrew words suggesting that they were sated with it; had more than enough; more than they knew well how to bear. We may suppose that they feared from such enemies something more and worse than merely contempt. The history shows that their enemies thought to try scorn first, and this failing, violence. Hence the cry for mercy and for help.

PSALM CXXIV.

Like Ps. 122 this "song of the ascents" bears the name of David as author; and like that also it has two cases of that peculiar idiom of the relative pronoun which indicates a later hand. In this case as in that, we may suppose the Psalm originally David's, but slightly modified to adapt it to the idioms of the times of the restoration.——The sentiment is remarkably congenial to the spirit of David: No help for me save in God. But for his help, how surely—nay, how many times—I should have perished utterly. The same conscious dependence on God filled the hearts of the leading men of the restoration.

1. If *it had* not *been* the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

2. If *it had* not *been* the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:

3. Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:

4. Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:

5. Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.

In v. 1, the last clause would be more true to the original, thus: "O let Israel say."——"Swallowed us up *quick*"—not in the sense *suddenly*, but in the ancient sense of *living, alive.* They would have engulfed us alive in their pit of destruction. The force of this language is readily seen in the fact that David usually and the restored exiles always had to contend against foes in a human and military point of view stronger than themselves.

6. Blessed *be* the LORD, who hath not given us *as* a prey to their teeth.

7. Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

8. Our help *is* in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

The figure under which their enemies are presented changes suddenly from a drowning flood to ravenous wild beasts, and then to hunters insnaring their prey. The "breaking of the net" applies aptly to the fall of Babylon before Cyrus, which was the means of their political redemption. That wonderful event broke the snare and let the exiles escape—adding another testimony to the great and oft developed truth that Israel's help is and ever has been in the name—the glorious attributes—of the great and true Jehovah, who, being the Maker of heaven and earth, has ample resources for the redemption of his chosen.

PSALM CXXV.

Both the sentiments and the figures of this "song of the ascents" concur in dating it during the revival age of the restoration. The pilgrims, coming up to their annual solemnities, greeted the hill-tops of Mt. Zion from afar, and saw there a symbol of the firmness and stability of Jehovah's promises—good for all those who trusted in him.

1. They that trust in the LORD *shall be* as mount Zion, *which* can not be removed, *but* abideth forever.

2. *As* the mountains *are* round about Jerusalem, so the LORD *is* round about his people from henceforth even forever.

"Abideth forever"—sits on her deep, immovable foundations. So firm is the standing, so safe the state of those who trust with serene and steadfast faith in Jehovah, the God of the covenant and of its promises. The realm of nature furnishes no figure for stability more fine and perfect than the mountain on his base. Oceans are tossed about by tempests; the grand old cedars come down at last; the clouds are fickle; man's mightiest works of art pass away; but the mountains are always firm to the human foot—are always there, quietly and grandly reposing on their changeless foundations. So are they who trust steadfastly in their God.—— In v. 2, the figure varies slightly. The mountains stand like military ramparts round about Jerusalem, encircling and defending: so God is a wall of circumvallation all round about his people. The form of the Hebrew sentence is abrupt, but expressive: "Jerusalem: the mountains are round about her, and the Lord is round about his people."

3. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

The "rod" is an emblem of authority, power. The "lot" represents all the interests, all that makes up the state, of the righteous—the sentiment being that the wicked shall not be allowed to hold power over the righteous. The reason is, lest the righteous be tempted beyond their virtue to resort to iniquity in resisting such rule. In this connection, the fact is one manifestation of God's care of his trustful people. He will not leave them forever—perhaps the sense is not long, under the rod of the wicked. The trial of his people under proud Babylon was terrible. In mercy the Lord cut it short in due time.

4. Do good, O LORD, unto *those that be* good, and to *them that are* upright in their hearts.

5. As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: *but* peace *shall be* upon Israel.

With full heart the Psalmist prays, (and invites all to join) for all good to be given to the good, but for such as turn aside from righteous to morally crooked ways, he can only say—The Lord will give them their portion according to their works—with those of their own class. So it must be. How can praying men, living in sympathy with God and righteousness, offer any other prayer as to the final doom of sinners whom the richest offered mercy fails to reclaim?

PSALM CXXVI.

This Psalm bears on its face strong evidence of having been written after the restoration of some of the exiles, and while yet there were others to come. The vivid description of the feelings and sensations of the people indicates that their restoration was then recent and fresh in mind.

1. When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

The word for "captivity" is taken by many able critics to be the abstract for the concrete; *i. e.*, captivity for captives, thus: "When the Lord restored to their homes the captives of Zion."——We could scarcely believe our senses. As in dreams we see things too good to be true and seem to be living a charmed life yet lacking the sense of reality; so were we when the proclamation went forth from the throne of Cyrus; Return ye to your ancient home. ——In the lapse of seventy years the hope of restoration to their land, so long deferred, had mostly gone out in despair, save as it rested (in some minds) on their faith in God's promise. The policy of those great powers in the East had long been settled, viz., to break up the old tribes and kingdoms of Western Asia; take the people into far eastern countries, and *never let them return.* No nation known to history, except the Jews, ever did return to rebuild their ancient cities and homes. Hence this joyous surprise.

2. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

3. The LORD hath done great things for us; *whereof* we are glad.

Strong words are these—our mouth full of laughter; our tongue full of loud shouts of joy (Hebrew). Even the heathen said, "The Lord their God hath magnified his doings for this people." ——V. 3, may be read at least equally well without the word "whereof," thus: "The Lord hath done great things for us: we are happy." We *were* sad; wretched; but mark the change: "we are full of joy now."

4. Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.

This seems to be a prayer for the return of yet other captives. Let their restoration be as when from the Northern hills of Palestine and Syria, the waters flow southward, and fill the long empty river channels of the South.——The Hebrew word for "streams" means strictly a river's bed, the channel which holds water when water is there, but is often dry. Naturally there is

joy for the husbandmen when those valley-beds are filled again with flowing waters. So, the prayer is, let thy people return joyfully to their father-land.

5. They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy.

6. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves *with him.*

The return of the rainy season suggests seed-sowing. But seed-sowing has in it more or less of anxiety, solicitude; for who at that stage knows certainly that his seed will return to him at all—much less, with manifold increase? The sowing time therefore is not the hour for the song of "harvest home." But God's ways in providence are shaped to minister faith and hope to the seed-sower, justifying the proverb; "They that sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy." The Psalmist beautifully expands this proverb: "He that goes forth with his burden of seed, weeping as he goes, will surely come back with shouts of joy, bearing the sheaves of his harvest." The seed that is sown, wet with the tears of solicitude, care, and prayer, brings a sure and glorious harvest at length. This is even more universally true in spiritual labor than in material—more true of labors for truth and for the souls of men than in labors for "the bread that perisheth." Christian labor that takes hold of the heart's deepest sensibilities, that means earnestness and real work, that is sustained by faith in the mighty God and has the witness of tears, can not fail of fruitage in its due season. The shouts of the "harvest home" will be *as* the tears of sowing time.——The translation "precious" applied to "seed" can scarcely be justified from the original. The Hebrew word means, the drawing out of seed, or the scattering it in the furrow, the sense being—"He that goes forth with tears, scattering his seed as he goes," etc. Compare Amos 9: 13, for the use of this word.——These verses had a forcible and instructive illustration in the tearful captives of Babylon, coming home at length to the joyful ingatherings of their father-land.

PSALM CXXVII.

This "song of the ascents" is ascribed in the usual form to Solomon as its author. As written by him it had a pertinent reference to the building of the first temple. The builders of the second had even more reason to feel their entire dependence on God for help, and therefore would appreciate the fitness and force of this ode for their times. Hence they wisely brought it forward into their compilation of this last book of Psalms.

1. Except the LORD build the house, they labor in vain

that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain.

"The house" means primarily the temple, the house of God, this being the usual Hebrew word for the temple. To the men of the restoration the rebuilding of the temple was a heavy work: the guarding of their city against hostile assaults involved anxious care. What could they do without God as their strong helper?

2. *It is* vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: *for* so he giveth his beloved sleep.

It is vain for you to be early to rise and late to rest, eating the bread of hard labor (Hebrew). "So," *i. e.*, all this, "God will give to his beloved *with sleep*." The beloved of God who trust his care and enjoy his blessings, shall obtain their bread *along with* needful sleep—*i. e.*, bread, and sleep besides—without sacrificing sleep to excessive unreasonable toil. So I prefer, on the whole, to interpret this somewhat difficult clause. Some have given it this turn: "So," *i. e.*, by means of severe labor, God gives his beloved sleep—the fatigue of their toil preparing them for sound sleep in its season.——Against this construction lie these objections: (*a*) That all hard laborers, and not God's beloved only or specially, get sleep out of hard toil.——(*b*) It supposes God's beloved to get good from a course declared to be "vain."

3. Lo, children *are* a heritage of the LORD: *and* the fruit of the womb *is his* reward.

4. As arrows *are* in the hand of a mighty man; so *are* children of the youth.

As in the building of the great "house" [the temple] and in the guarding of the city, so in the rearing of a family, God's blessing and this only insures the desired result.——"Children of the youth" are children born to parents in their early years rather than in their old age. The thought seems to be not only that such sons and daughters are usually more vigorous, but that their vigor turns to better account for the aid of their fathers.

5. Happy *is* the man that has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

"Shall speak with the enemies in the gate," contemplates not conflicts at arms but controversies at law in the courts, held in the gates of the city. The father, powerfully flanked with stalwart sons, is strong for such encounters.——Such sentiments were timely in the age of the restoration, for increase of population was a first necessity to the stability and permanence of the infant colony.

PSALM CXXVIII.

This short Psalm takes up and expands the sentiment with which Ps. 127 closed. Obviously the state of the infant colony sufficiently accounts for the interest felt in these thoughts. Zech. 8 is rich and fragrant with promises of the same sort of blessings: "The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof."

1. Blessed *is* every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.

2. For thou shalt eat the labor of thine hands: happy *shalt* thou *be*, and *it shall be* well with thee.

These family blessings are the reward of true piety.——V. 2 is better read—"When thou shalt eat the labor of thy hands, happy shalt thou be therein and all shall be well with thee.——We must not fail to notice the special force of this idea as seen in the light of the facts of history in the times of Ezra and Nehemiah respecting ungodly intermarriages with heathen wives. This was wide and far from the fear of the Lord. Note how solemnly and earnestly those pious men protested with tears and persistent rebukes (Ezra 9 and 10, and Neh. 13: 23–30).

3. Thy wife *shall be* as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

4. Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

Beautiful figures these, and beautiful the realities they represent. "Behold;" take note of the facts; the man who feareth the Lord shall reap these blessings as his reward.

5. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

6. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, *and* peace upon Israel.

Thou shalt joyfully behold not only a lovely growing family of thine own, but the good of the holy city, all thy days; children's children for thyself and the peace of Israel besides.

PSALM CXXIX.

This song sweeps its eye over the historic past of Israel, bringing back this one great moral lesson—that though their enemies had afflicted them sorely, yet their God had always interposed in their time of need. This view of the past calls forth the trustful

prayer that God would frustrate the schemes of their enemies in all future time.

1. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say:
2. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.
3. The ploughers ploughed upon my back: they made long their furrows.

The youth of Israel as a nation was spent in Egypt, much of it in political bondage. Then and all along at intervals onward their enemies had oppressed them greatly—*much*, the Hebrew word primarily means; but in this historic review, it may include frequency as well as severity.——"O let Israel say"—the word for "now" having no reference to time, but being only a word of entreaty.——Yet gratefully to God let me say, "They have not been able," *i. e.*, to destroy me. They have scourged me sorely, "ridging my back with their furrows"—where the wounds of the savage scourge are compared to the ridges of a plowed field.

4. The LORD *is* righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

The Lord is righteous, and therefore interposed to arrest oppression: he cut off the cords—the tugs by which the figurative plow on my back was drawn. This construction has at least the merit of keeping up the figure to the end. To cut the cords by which the scourging, *i. e.*, the plow, was worked, broke down their power. No other sense of the word "cords" is germain to the figure before the mind.

5. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.
6. Let them be as the grass *upon* the house-tops, which withereth afore it groweth up:
7. Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.
8. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD *be* upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

Grass on oriental house-tops is of necessity short-lived, the soil for roots being the least amount which would admit any growth at all. With the first abatement of the rain and the first warm rays of the sun, it must wither.——Not "afore it groweth"—for this construction would preclude grass altogether; but before one plucks it, *i. e.*, it withers of itself, under the agencies of nature, and without human hands to pluck it up.——Still carrying forward the supposed case—with such grass no mower fills his hands; no binder of sheaves his arm; the passers by could have no heart to say to men harvesting such grass—"The Lord's blessing be on

you."——Let all the endeavors, all the results of them that hate Zion, be like such an utter abortion!——The story of Ruth (2: 4) furnishes a beautiful case of the good wishes and pious responses of men in the midst of harvest bounty.

PSALM CXXX.

This group of songs for the ascents, to be sung on the way up to the holy city, would be quite incomplete without at least one of penitential character, confessing sin and imploring forgiveness. For the nation had been fearfully guilty before God and were then beginning to enjoy the mercy of restoration to their father-land only because they had penitently sought forgiveness. Therefore, let them recall those confessions and prayers—nay more, renew them, before the Lord. Who has not abundant occasion for such confessions and for such prayers?

1. Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.
2. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

"Out of the depths," *i. e.*, of sorest affliction—as one in deep waters overborne with sorrow.——Let thine ears be *attentive*—quickened to thoughtful hearing.

3. If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?
4. But *there is* forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

"Shouldest mark iniquities"—shouldest *watch* for them—the same word which is used below of those who "*watch* for the morning."——"Who shall stand?"—in the sense either of standing up in self-vindication, or standing under the infliction of deserved punishment. Who could do either—defend, or endure?——But forgiveness is possible to thee—thy purpose in it being to beget true piety. Thou forgivest the suppliant sinner in order that, being forgiven, he may be drawn and held forever by gratitude and love to a life of godly fear. "For the love of Christ constraineth." The moral power of clemency, forgiving mercy, surpasses all other moral power toward producing the new life of reverence and loving obedience.

5. I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.
6. My soul *waiteth* for the LORD more than they that watch for the morning: *I say, more than* they that watch for the morning.

"My *soul* doth wait"—equivalent to saying, I wait with all my soul—earnestly.——In his word of promise do I hope.——As the lost traveler, or the imperilled sea-faring men watch and long for the morning light, so and more than so does my soul watch and wait for the light of God's face.

7. Let Israel hope in the LORD, for with the LORD *there is* mercy, and with him *is* plenteous redemption.

8. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Literally, "O Israel, hope thou in the Lord"—the ground of inspiring hope being that with him pardoning mercy is much, great, plenteous; it comes not in scanty measure, but in measure abundant: not from reluctant hand and heart, but from a full hand and overflowing heart! And he will forgive penitent Israel all her sins!

PSALM CXXXI.

David's name is at the head of this short Psalm. If we ask to what point of time in his history it may be supposed to have special reference, Psalm 132 and its scenes will suggest as the answer—The bringing of the ark from Kirjath-Jearim [Ephrath] up to the hill of Zion (see 2 Sam. 6). The awe-inspiring calamity on Uzzah might naturally impress David with a sense of God's holiness and majesty, and suggest that no other spirit than that of most profound humility could be pleasing to him, or could come with safety so near the symbol of his glorious presence.——It was vital to cherish the same reverent awe of God's ark and sanctuary among the restored exiles as they were re-establishing the worship of God in his sanctuary.

1. LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

"Lord, I have not ambitiously sought the throne of Israel"—have not thrust myself forward into high positions uncalled of thee.——The verb translated "exercise myself" means *walked* as applied to the course of one's life. I have not pushed myself into great matters—made myself conversant with them.

2. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul *is* even as a weaned child.

The verbs translated, "behaved," "quieted myself," suggest rather this sense: I have leveled down [toned down] and silenced my soul; I have suppressed and kept down undue aspirations, as a weaned child keeps down and crucifies his natural cravings and makes himself quiet without the long enjoyed indulgence. David

would imply that his soul was only human; had by nature aspirations in plenty, but had subdued them under the fear and love of God.

3. Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and forever.

"O Israel, hope thou in the Lord evermore"—it being implied that such hope and trust stand opposed to the proud aspirations just above referred to, and consist only with the sincere humility which the Psalm illustrates and commends.

PSALM CXXXII.

This Psalm is built upon two great events in the life of David, viz., his bringing the ark from its exile up to the hill of Zion (2 Sam. 6), and the promise made to him of a kingdom in the line of his family, made perpetual through the Messiah, as recorded in 2 Sam. 7. Upon the basis of these great events and the promises of God imbedded in them, the restored exiles rested their whole movement—their hopes in God and their endeavors to re-establish the institutions of their fathers. Hence those events of David's history were naturally full of religious inspiration, and were pertinently wrought into this sacred song, in all points appropriate to the times of the restoration.

1. LORD, remember David, *and* all his afflictions:

2. How he sware unto the LORD, *and* vowed unto the mighty *God* of Jacob;

3. Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;

4. I will not give sleep to mine eyes, *or* slumber to mine eyelids

5. Until I find out a place for the LORD, a habitation for the mighty *God* of Jacob.

"Lord, remember as to David," *i. e.*, in his behalf, as inuring to his benefit—all his trials, his heart-burdens—which the Psalmist proceeds to specify in certain particulars. Remember how solemnly and earnestly he set his heart on recovering the ark, on providing a suitable habitation for it upon Mt. Zion, and locating it there.——The word for "surely" (v. 3) is the customary form of the solemn oath: "*If* I shall go into the tent of my house," etc., this "*if*" being intensely emphatic, equivalent to saying: "*If* I do, then let my name perish!" So deeply in earnest was David in this enterprise.

6. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.

These may be taken as the words of David, speaking for himself and his associates. We heard of the ark first while we were at Ephratah—"the same is Bethlehem" (Gen. 48: 7). That is, this being David's native city, he heard of the ark first while yet a mere youth in his paternal home. Ultimately he found it at Kirjath-Jearim, the forest city [precisely, the city of forest trees]. The history confirms this point. See 1 Chron. 13: 5, 6.

7. We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.

8. Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.

9. Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.

By a sudden transition the ark is supposed to be brought to its destined home and all is ready for worship. Pertinent now is the solemn public prayer that God himself would arise and come into this place of his abiding rest—the seat of his visible presence [the Shekinah] being above the mercy-seat, upon the lid of the ark of the covenant and underneath the cherubim. The words of this prayer are those used by Solomon at the dedication of the first temple when he came precisely to this point—the consecration of the ark and the prayerful invocation of God's presence to abide there (2 Chron. 6: 41); "Now, therefore, arise, O Lord God, into thy resting place, thou and the ark of thy strength; let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness."

10. For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.

The usage of the phrase: "Turn not away the face," appears fully in the original in 1 King 2: 16, 17, 20—"reject not my petition."——Exegetically, the great question of the verse is: What is meant by "thine anointed?" Is it David himself; or some definite king among his merely human descendants; or does it apply to each or any of them as they come into office to bear the responsibilities of this line of anointed kings? I incline to the latter construction, under which the petition is applicable to any one or to all the anointed successors of David. For David's sake let every one of them be admitted to free audience before thee and his prayer be evermore availing. The context contemplates a long line of kings descended from David. It was pertinent to make them all the subjects of this prayer.

11. The LORD hath sworn *in* truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

12. If thy children will keep my covenant and my testi-

mony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.

The points made in these verses may be seen in 2 Sam. 7, and 1 Kings 8: 25, 26, and 1 Chron. 17, and Ps. 89: 19–37, etc.

13. For the LORD hath chosen Zion: he hath desired *it* for his habitation.

14. This *is* my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

15. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

All these points have a precious bearing on the hearts of the restored exiles. Upon the basis of these ancient promises they were then building with immense labor another temple in which they pray that God may dwell with his manifested presence, fulfilling his great promises as made specially to David.——The provisons—the bread (v. 15)—should doubtless be understood as *spiritual*, not material; the bread of eternal life, and not merely the "bread that perisheth."

17. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

18. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

The "horn," a common symbol of power, is here coupled with the idea of vegetable growth, to "bud"—but the Hebrew word suggests springing up as the grass. The ultimate reference may be to David's greater Son, in whom all these magnificent promises to David and his seed culminate. So understood, the allusion to this passage by Zacharias (Luke 1: 69) tallies well with the statement that "he was filled with the Holy Ghost and prophesied, "The Lord hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David."——"I have arranged" [put in order] "a lamp for mine anointed," referring to the lamps kept in order by the priests in the temple. This usage seems to furnish the figure; its significance comes from the relation between *light* and *truth*, so that this signifies the light of salvation which the Messiah sheds forth on a morally dark world.——Glorious victory shall be his reward; his enemies clothed with the shame of overthrow and defeat; his own crown flourishing in perpetual beauty and glory. The figure here follows that in v. 17—the horn shooting up as a vegetable growth; so the crown puts forth blossoms and flowers of celestial beauty.

PSALM CXXXIII.

This Psalm, ascribed to David, was admirably adapted to his times to encourage the great convocation on their religious festivals; and not less adapted to the age of the restoration when the same results were so exceedingly desirable.

1. Behold, how good and how pleasant *it is* for brethren to dwell together in unity!

By general consent of lexicographers and critics, the Hebrew words translated "together in unity," mean *together in place*, and leave unity in feeling and spirit to be inferred. The writer must be supposed to think of the great religious festivals which brought the masses of the people together for the delightful service of public religious worship. This service was grateful to such a heart as David's; it was morally and politically wholesome; it was socially delightful to the whole people, old and young; it could scarcely fail to exert a precious religious influence upon all. The bringing of the whole people together in one place during these great festivals served to bring their hearts together in fraternal union.

2. *It is* like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, *even* Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

The influence of such a convocation was fragrant like the odors of precious ointment, that which was poured on Aaron's head being specified for the two-fold reason of its superior richness, and of its most sacred associations. The composition of this anointing oil may be seen in Ex. 30: 23–25.

3. As the dew of Hermon, *and as the dew* that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, *even* life for evermore.

Of the two figures which set forth the delightfulness of the great religious convocations of Israel, the anointing oil is the work of human hands; the dew, of divine. The grateful refreshing dews drop down from God. In climates where rains are restricted to certain seasons and heavy dews supply in a measure their absence, it is not easy to over-estimate their value.——On this verse some critics raise the question how the dews of Hermon, far away on the north-eastern boundary of Palestine, could fall on the mountains of Zion. I doubt if the poet-author had any difficulty in his mind on this point. He seems to have thought of Mt. Hermon as distinguished for its copious dews of material sort, but of Mt. Zion as similarly distinguished for dews of spiritual sort—dews of heavenly grace, even God's own best blessings—life eternal.

PSALM CXXXIV.

1. Behold, bless ye the LORD, all *ye* servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

2. Lift up your hands *in* the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

3. The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.

This last of the "songs of the ascents" supposes the people to have reached the temple and to call on the priests in attendance there to bless Jehovah in devout adoration.——The question may arise whether the priests stood *throughout the whole night* in the temple. These very words and in this form occur Ps. 92: 2: "To show forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness *in the nights*." With scarcely a doubt this refers to the morning and evening sacrifices.——"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary," should be *toward* the sanctuary, the most holy place—this being the customary attitude of prayer and worship.——In the last verse, the priests respond with their benediction—"The Lord who made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion"—the place of his holy habitation; "thee" applying to every humble worshiper. Thus people and priests call upon each other to render worship and praise to their common Lord and Father. Historically stated, we may see something similar—perhaps the very same—in Neh. 9: 5, and onward.——We may hope that these songs of the ascents were verily sung "with the spirit and with the understanding also," quickening the hearts of all the worshipers on those impressive, hallowed days of their holy convocation.

PSALM CXXXV.

The songs of the ascents are closed, but their spirit lingers still. Indeed we may suppose the people to have now rested from their journeyings, planting their weary feet and pitching their tents in the sacred city, prepared for the delightful scenes of worship, so long and joyously anticipated. What now but songs of praise? The various classes—priests, Levites, people, call upon each other and call on themselves to lift up heart and voice in reverent praise to their own Jehovah.——This Psalm involves no exegetical difficulties. All is plain. Most of the phrases have occurred already.

1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise *him*, O ye servants of the LORD.

2. Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God.

3. Praise the LORD; for the LORD *is* good: sing praises unto his name; for *it is* pleasant.

4. For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, *and* Israel for his peculiar treasure.

"His peculiar treasure," to appropriate them specially to himself, having henceforth a personal right of property in them as in no other nation. The rather unusual words for "peculiar treasure" occur in the same sense, Ex. 19: 5, and Deut. 7: 6, and 14: 2, and 26: 18.

5. For I know that the LORD *is* great, and *that* our Lord *is* above all gods.

6. Whatsoever the LORD pleased, *that* did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.

7. He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.

"For *I* know"—the word "I" being made emphatic in the original. Whatever may be the case with others, I have had personal and precious experience of the greatness of Jehovah's power, and of his infinite supremacy above all other gods. The author of the Psalm may either speak for all Israel as a unit, or he may have framed his song so that every worshiper might say this for himself as his own testimony.——This supreme Lord has done his pleasure every-where—a truth which may be seen more clearly by looking at some of its particular manifestations—*e. g.*, in heaven, earth, sea, etc.——"He maketh lightnings for the rain" to accompany it and add sublimity and majesty to the tempest and the storm. "He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries" according to the favorite poetic conception of those times—that the Lord imprisons his winds in store-houses, to call them forth when he will for his work. See Job 38: 22.——The phrases in v. 7 appear in Jer. 10: 13, and 51: 16.

8. Who smote the first-born of Egypt, both of man and beast.

9. *Who* sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.

10. Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;

11. Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:

12. And gave their land *for* a heritage, a heritage unto Israel his people.

Gave their lands for an inheritance to Israel, to be held by them through their successive generations. This was in fulfillment of long standing promise to the patriarchs.

13. Thy name, O LORD, *endureth* forever; *and* thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.

14. For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.

The memorial name of Israel's God is *Jehovah*, with reference to its significance—fidelity to promise, faithfulness resting on immutability. See Ex. 3: 15, and Hos. 12: 5. It had pleased God to give them this name of himself with this interpretation; with joy therefore, the Psalmist declares that this name shall stand good through all generations—the ground of abiding, everlasting confidence in the Lord of Hosts as by covenant their own God.—— "Will judge his people"—in discipline and even chastisement for their national sins, as in their then recent captivity; but he will also repent himself in behalf of his servants when they turn penitently to seek his face. See this truth drawn out beautifully in Jer. 31: 16–21.

15. The idols of the heathen *are* silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

16. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;

17. They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there *any* breath in their mouths.

18. They that make them are like unto them: *so is* every one that trusteth in them.

Our God is utterly unlike and infinitely above all the idols of the heathen, as you will see by a moment's consideration upon what they are. Nearly the same words occur Ps. 115: 4–8.——In v. 18 the original must mean, not "are like them" *i. e.*, in character, but *shall be* like them, *i. e.*, in destiny—sure to be destroyed—brought utterly to nought.

19. Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:

20. Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.

21. Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

Let blessings in the sense of offered praises go forth *out of Zion* to Jehovah who dwelleth in Jerusalem. Let all the people who constitute his Zion pour forth their ceaseless praises to their Almighty Lord who dwells in the midst of them.

PSALM CXXXVI.

This Psalm bears the closest relation to Ps. 135—identically the same in its general purpose, viz., praise to God for his goodness and mercy: and similar in many of its specifications. It is peculiar only in its structure, each several clause being followed by what may be called "a refrain"—"for his mercy endureth forever." This seems to have been sung as a chorus, perhaps in response with the other clauses. Historically it may have been composed to be sung on occasion of laying the foundation stone of the temple upon which occasion Ezra (3: 11) informs us, "They sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid."

1. O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

2. O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

3. O give thanks to the LORD of lords: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

"For he is good" is the one comprehensive ground or reason for praise, including in itself all the particulars.——The God of gods—not the God of all the false gods; but a superlative phrase meaning simply the *Supreme* God, as in Deut. 19: 7, whence both these phrases—"God of gods" and "Lord of lords"—seem to have been taken.

4. To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

"Who alone doeth," etc., which means more than doing them *without aid*, by his own single arm. The higher idea is—He and he only, to the exclusion of all others; he and none but he, doeth these incomparable miracles of power. This latter sense practically includes the former.

5. To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

6. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

"Spread out the earth above the waters," *i. e.*, higher than they. See Ps. 24: 2, and notes there.

7. To him that made great lights: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

8. The sun to rule by day: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

9. The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

This ruling of the day and the night follows the record in Gen. 1.

10. To him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

Remarkably the same mercy smote Egypt's first-born which saved all Israel—the former being a necessary part of the same merciful work.

11. And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

12. With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

13. To him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

14. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

15. But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

According to vs. 13, 14, the Lord having divided the Red Sea into parts, made Israel pass *between the parts*, *i. e.*, between the waters on one side and the waters on the other.

16. To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

17. To him which smote great kings: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

18. And slew famous kings: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

19. Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

20. And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

21. And gave their land for a heritage: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

22. *Even* a heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

Here again mercy shines in the judgments sent on opposing kings.

23. Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy *endureth* forever:

24. And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

The fact that the people had but just come forth from their political bondage in Babylon suggests *that* as the low estate here thought of. So we might infer from Ps. 107: 16.

25. Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

26. O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy *endureth* forever.

God, the universal Provider. See Ps. 104: 27. Surely we may trust him to provide for all our wants and much more if we are his obedient, trustful people.——"God of heaven"—a phrase not in common use until the age of the restoration—occurs eight times in the book of Ezra, twice in Nehemiah, three times in Daniel.

PSALM CXXXVII.

This exquisitely touching, plaintive song, admired as such in all ages, was written by some unknown pen, either in Babylon or soon after the restoration while the scenes of the captivity were still fresh. It is admirably adapted to its place in this collection among Psalms of the restoration, impressively suggesting: We have abundant reason for thanksgiving and praise from overflowing hearts; for, think of the long years of our sadness, and silence, and tears by the rivers of Babylon—our harps on the willows; no songs of our dear Zion on our tongues: but how changed the scene now! Such a song of reminiscences could not fail to deepen the tide of grateful praise for their present mercies.

1. By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

2. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

"Babylon"—perhaps for Babylonia, *i. e.*, not the city alone but the country politically connected. Then the "rivers" [plural] might include the Euphrates, Tigris, Chaboras (Ezek. 1: 1, 3) and Ulai (Dan. 8: 2). But the Euphrates itself was not restricted to a single channel, for one of the great works of Nebuchadnezzar was the construction of an immense reservoir—an artificial lake, into which by canals he conducted the waters of the Euphrates at flood, probably for the double purpose of abating the danger to the low lands from its spring freshets, and of storing waters for irrigation in the dry season. Upon these immense works it is more than supposable that the captive Jews were employed, as their fathers were in Egypt on public works of national interest.

The location of the scenes of this song beside these river channels—the scenes of their daily toil—would then be specially suggestive. ——"There we sat down;" but what is the special significance of this sitting? Is it simply living as the place of residence, or resting as laborers sit down when over much weary, or mourning as the orientals sit on the ground or in ashes under the weight of crushing sorrow? If the word "sat" has any special significance it is probably the latter. See cases of this usage, Isa. 3: 26, and Lam. 2: 10, and Job 2: 13.——Not only sat [on the ground] but *wept*—wept, not particularly as they remembered the homes of their fathers in the goodly land of promise, or the plenty or the freedom enjoyed there, but as they remembered *Zion*, the hallowed temple, the holy city, the place and the scenes of sacred worship, the recognized home of Israel's God, sitting beneath the cherubim. The fresh remembrance of Zion and of all these surroundings of hers brought from our eyes bitter tears.——There, alas! we had no more occasion for our harps of song; so we hung them on the willows along the river's bank.

3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us *required of us* mirth, *saying*, Sing us *one* of the songs of Zion.

Somewhat more literally thus: "For there our captors demanded of us words of song, and our robbers, mirth [or joy]—"Sing to us out of a song of Zion."——Did this demand come of curiosity or of a spirit of insult? Possibly only the former; more probably, the latter. That those who made the demand are spoken of as having captured and plundered them implies that this demand was made in somewhat the same spirit. It is at least obvious that they failed to appreciate the sadness of heart under which these captives were weeping. Perhaps their spirit was not unlike that of American slaveholders (that were) who were never pleased to see a slave in tears, but would fain call or tempt him to mirth instead.——Incidentally the case witnesses to the musical culture of the Hebrews as at least in advance of their age.

4. How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?

5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget *her cunning*.

6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

Why could they not sing? In most touching words they answer. "How shall we sing the songs of our Jehovah in a strange land?" Every strain would seem in its echo to mock our grief, telling us that he is our faithful God no longer! Ah, can we forget Jerusalem! To sing in tones of mirth as they demand would imply it;

but when I do, let my right hand lose its skill on the harp; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth and no voice remain for song!——"If I exalt not Jerusalem above the head of my joy"—fairly represents the last clause of v. 6. How could they be mirthful when their most beloved Jerusalem lay in utter desolation!

7. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze *it*, raze *it*, *even* to the foundation thereof.

The tone of vs. 7–9 shows plainly that the Hebrew captives felt this demand upon them for a song of Zion to be a cruel taunt, one of the bitter aggravations of their lot.——The "day of Jerusalem" was that memorable one when the walls fell, and her enemies rushed in to sack, burn, and destroy. Then the children of Edom, their national cousins, were specially spiteful, revengeful. Wisely, prudentially, they had a common interest with Judah in repelling this Chaldean invasion and in driving this conquering horde back from Western Asia to their home on the Euphrates; but their old antipathy against the Hebrew race blazed forth—an outrage on humanity and a rank offense against the God of heaven! As said here, they shouted, Raze, raze the city to its very foundations; leave not one stone upon another! The prophet Obadiah (vs. 10–15) charges upon them that they stood on the enemy's side; looked on joyfully, and spake proudly in the day of their distress; joined in the pillage; intercepted the fugitives and turned them back upon the sword of the conquerors. Amos (1: 11) gave the reasons for the ruin of Edom, saying: "Because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever." Was there not a natural fitness in the prayer that God would "remember these children of Edom?"

8. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy *shall he be*, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

9. Happy *shall he be*, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

These words will suggest even to candid minds the query whether they are not open to the charge of cruel vindictiveness? In answer to this question it has been said: These words were simply reported by the Psalmist as having been wrung from the lips and souls of the crushed captives, but not indorsed as right But this leaves the question still unanswered—Why then do they stand in a song for the Hebrew sanctuary with no exception taken to their spirit? Would there not be danger lest their spirit, supposing it to be wrong, would be contagious and morally bad?—— A deeper view of the case will suggest that this idea of retribution, even in its most specific form, was *not original* with these captives. They must have known the "burden on Babylon" as given by Isaiah

(13 : 16, 18). "The children shall be dashed in pieces before their eyes; they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children." Also the words of Jeremiah, sent expressly to them during their captivity: "Take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her. Recompense her according to her works; according to all that she hath done, do unto her" (Jer. 50 : 15, 29). Remarkably the Targum represents these words of our Psalm as uttered by the archangels Michael and Gabriel. Wordsworth remarks that "this view of them has its value as showing that in the opinion of the Hebrew church these expressions were not regarded as coming from the mouth of men speaking their own feelings, but as derived from a higher source. This is the true view of them. They are the words of the people of God accepting and re-echoing the judicial decrees revealed in his word." ——It seems to me that no just opinion of their moral character can be formed without taking into account the prophecies on the subject, a part only of which are cited above, and which must have taught them unmistakably God's purpose of retribution upon both Babylon and Edom, and, in fact, which must have suggested to them the very ideas which seem to our view most exceptionable—the dashing of their infants upon the rocks. The question in its moral aspects amounts therefore to this: Is it, or is it not, morally right for God's people to accept his purposes of retribution upon their enemies when those purposes are definitely revealed? Can they with moral uprightness say, "Even so, Father, for so it has seemed good in thy sight?"

PSALM CXXXVIII.

With this Psalm commences a series of eight (138–145) ascribed to David, yet some of them bear the marks of having been slightly modified in diction to harmonize with the dialect of the age of the restoration. Their general tone is that of prayer and of praise, filling therefore an exceedingly useful place in this new collection of songs for the sanctuary compiled in this revival age.——Upon the Psalm before us a new light is shed by reading it in connection with 2 Sam. 7, and 1 Chron. 17—that great event of David's religious life, in which his soul was moved to build an house for the Lord, and the prayer of his heart was answered by God's promise to build him an house—in the sense of an eternal succession upon the throne of Israel, and the great Messiah to crown all.

1. I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

"With my whole heart" is entirely in the spirit of David, developing one of the prime excellences of his character—a soul full of love and gratitude to God, the true spirit of worship.——"Before

the gods"—in the face of the heathen gods of all the world, squarely against the whole drift of an idolatrous age, as if he would fain make his example a solid protest against the usages and public sentiment of every other nation under heaven.

2. I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

"For thou hast magnified thy word" (of promise), *i. e.*, as given 2 Sam. 7, above all prior manifestations of thy name. He means to say that this great promise was a step in advance upon all that had gone before. So it truly was. It was growth and expansion in the volume of prophetic foreshowings as to the Messiah. It located him in the line of David; it made David's reign a symbol of his. Hence David's heart was moved to special worship and praise for this loving-kindness of his God and for that truth of God in which he knew so well that he might fearlessly repose for the complete fulfillment of every good word he had spoken.

3. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, *and* strengthenedst me *with* strength in my soul.

The Hebrew verb for "strengthenedst" seems to have the sense—to make me courageous, brave; to raise my hopes with the assurance of great success in my life-work for the God of Israel. Gesenius says—"to make fierce, courageous; to embolden." Fuerst: "Thou excitest me strongly in my soul."

4. All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.

5. Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great *is* the glory of the LORD.

This was prophetic vision, foreseeing that the Great Messiah would become the joy of all earthly kings: the theme of their praises. Isaiah is full of this sentiment. We find it in Ps. 68: 29, 31, and 102: 15.

6. Though the LORD *be* high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

Though the Lord Jehovah be "the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, dwelling in the high and holy place," yet he is not too high to see the lowly ones of earth, those of a "humble and contrite spirit." "The proud he knoweth"—but not as being in the moral sense *near*. He is not near them as their Friend.

7. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

8. The LORD will perfect *that which* concerneth me: thy

mercy, O LORD, *endureth* forever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

This great work which the Lord has begun in my behalf, he will surely finish, for his mercy will be as great through all coming ages as now. I may therefore fitly pray him never to desist from this work of his hands—never to let his hand be *slack* [the sense of the Hebrew] in its execution.

PSALM CXXXIX.

This remarkable Psalm has been justly admired in all ages for its view of the spiritual nature and perfections of God, especially of his omniscience and omniprescence. Noticeably, these are thought of and presented here, not in their abstract nature and relations, but in their personal relations and bearings upon "me," the writer, and myself—each singer and reader of this Psalm. The God of David, the God of the ancient Hebrew worship, was no mere abstraction, no impersonal universality, to be thought of only as infinitely distant and infinitely regardless of man or of man's moral life and real welfare. The Psalm before us is a lesson on these points.——Though ascribed to David, its style, choice of words and the peculiar sense sometimes given them are thought to indicate strongly the age of the restoration. The basis of the Psalm being David's, it may have been modified in these respects by those who in the age of Ezra revised it for greater practical usefulness. That this was the traditional opinion of learned Jews is indicated by the remark in the Septuagint caption: "A Psalm of David by Haggai and Zechariah."

1. O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known *me*.
2. Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off.
3. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted *with* all my ways.

"Thou knowest my down-sitting and my uprising"—cognizant of all my daily life.——"Thou understandest my thought"—in the moral sense of the word—my will, purpose—thou knowest from afar. Since God must be thought of as far off as truly as near, it is pertinent to consider that even from the most distant point conceivable, he still knoweth my most secret thought.——To this correspond the words of Eliphaz (Job 22: 12–14): "Is not God in the height of heaven? And behold the height of the stars how high they are! And thou sayest, How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him that he seeth not, and he walketh through the circuit of heaven." Pertinent here are the words of the Lord through Jere

miah also (Jer. 23: 23, 24): "Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord."——Thou *compasseth* my path"—but the sense of this verb, best sustained by usage, is to *winnow*, sift, and so to disclose and search out perfectly. Some critics, however, give the word the sense, to encircle, hedge about, in the sense of guarding. ——"Art acquainted," as by most familiar intercourse, as if thou hadst always lived with me [Hebrew] and thus become entirely familiar with my ways.

4. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but,* lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

5. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

6. *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I can not *attain* unto it.

"Not a word but *lo;*" behold; look at this wonderful fact, that God knows perfectly every word that passes my tongue!——"Hast beset me"—not in the bad sense of waylaying, but of being close about me, so very near, behind and before, even thy hand is laid upon me.——"Such knowledge as this is too wonderful for me to comprehend"—too high for me to reach, grasp and measure. It surpasses all my notions of knowledge as obtained among men.

7. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

8. If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there.*

9. *If* I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

10. Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

Passing now from God's all perfect knowledge to his universal presence, he would fain represent this by supposing all imaginable ways of escape from it. "If I were to mount up to heaven, thou are there; or make Sheol my bed, thou art there."——[If I say] "I will take the wings of dawn; let me dwell in the farthest sea; even there thy hand would lead me; thy right hand would hold me fast."

11. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me.

12. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the night *are* both alike *to thee.*

Literally, "And then I say, Surely darkness will shield me, but night becomes light about me. Yea, darkness will not make it

dark as to thee; and night will shine as the day; as the darkness, as the light"—this last clause being a special Hebrew idiom meaning that one is just like the other; it makes no difference which; all is the same with God.

13. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

14. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvelous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well.

"My reins"—my most secret parts. Thou hadst perfect control of my whole being; it was in thine hand and under thine eye from my very conception in the womb. This view of the case calls forth praise to the Great Father. I will praise thee, for I am fearfully distinguished" [*i. e.*, from other beings of lower order]; "marvelous are thy works; my soul knoweth this much"—very thoroughly; my experience, my knowledge of myself and of my relations to my Maker impress these truths upon me.

15. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

16. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them.

A free translation with explanations attached will best present my views of these difficult verses. "My body" [Hebrew, bones] "was not concealed from thee when I was formed in secret, curiously wrought [like embroidered work] in the womb"—often compared for its secrecy to the depths of the earth. "My shapeless, unformed mass [the fœtus] thine eyes did see, and in thy book [of divine memory] were all of them written, even all my future days were shaped before even one of them yet was." That is, God knew me yet unborn and shaped all my future life from that ante-birth period. The original has no word for "members." The word really given is "*days*," in the sense of his future historic days—the after-life he was to live.

17. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!

18. *If* I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

"Thy thoughts, O God"—not meaning my thoughts of thee but *thy thoughts of me.* How precious to me to realize all thy thoughts concerning me; to think how many they are; how far back in my personal existence they commenced; how constant and active they have been ever since; how they have shaped my activities and

determined all my destiny! How vain if I were to attempt to count them! While I sleep, thou watchest evermore about me; when I awake, still thou art near; I am with thee.——Some critics give the verb translated "precious" the sense *difficult of comprehension*, inscrutable; taking their authority from late Chaldean usage. The Hebrew meaning—"precious"—seems to me more in the spirit of the Psalm and of the immediate context.

19. Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

20. For they speak against thee wickedly, *and* thine enemies take *thy name* in vain.

We must find the connection of this thought with what precedes in the Psalmist's purpose to make a practical application of these views of God's ever present hand and ever active care and love. His mind labors on the question of his moral relations to God's enemies. How would God have me think of them and feel toward them?——V. 19 commences [literally] "If thou, O God, wilt slay the wicked"—then I stand aloof from them; I bid them away from me; for I can have no sympathy with men too wicked to be suffered by thee to live. ——Then v. 20 gives particulars in the grand indictment against them: "They speak against thee with malicious intent; they take thy name in vain—thine enemies!" Real enemies to thee they are, as all their words and actions show.

21. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

22. I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

Is not my heart with thee, O God in all its sympathies? I hate thy haters; I utterly loathe, abhor, those who rise up in open hostility against thee. As they are thine enemies, so I count them mine.——It does not seem to have entered for one moment into the Psalmist's theology that this spirit involves sinful vindictiveness. No doubt it seemed to him the most natural thing possible and the most righteous that his sympathies should flow in the same moral channel with God's; that his heart should be perfectly at one with the heart and the interests of his benevolent Father.

23. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24. And see if *there be any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

One closing supplication: Since thou, O God, knowest me so perfectly, I implore thee to keep thine eye evermore upon me; reveal my heart truly to myself; see if there be any way of mischief, way of wrong, in me; and lead me in the way of life eternal. ——Critics differ slightly as to the primary sense of the word trans-

lated "wicked," some supposing it to refer to idolatry; others, to pain. The connection suffices to show that it must refer to moral evil, sin.——The "way everlasting" may refer primarily to the old way of holy men, patriarchs and saints of the olden time; but the other view—the way that leads to endless life, seems to me more direct and pertinent.

PSALM CXL.

This Psalm ascribed to David takes up and expands the thought of Ps. 139: 19–22—which probably accounts for its place here in this compilation. The reader will notice its striking similarity to Ps. 52 and 54–59, in which David treats of his great dangers and trials and of his prayers to God, during his persecutions suffered from Saul.——The good men of the times of Ezra and Nehemiah had no little occasion to sympathize with David since they too had sore trials from personal and national enemies—a fact which sufficiently accounts for their bringing this and kindred Psalms into this Book V of the Psalter.

1. Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man;

2. Which imagine mischiefs in *their* heart; continually are they gathered together *for* war.

3. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison *is* under their lips. Selah.

In the last clause of v. 2, "Continually are they gathered together for war," the critics differ slightly; *e. g.*, "Gather wars together; multiplying them."——"Excite, stir up wars;" "Who dwell in dissensions quarrels;" "Gather *for* battle."——The comparison of a slanderous tongue to a serpent is not uncommon in David's Psalms.

4. Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.

5. The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the way side; they have set gins for me. Selah.

"From the violent men who plot to thrust my feet from under me," contemplates the case of men who sought his life by violence. Snares to entrap him come by figure from the methods of taking wild animals.

6. I said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.

7. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

8. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; *lest* they exalt themselves. Selah.

Amid all these dangers, David looked upward to God for refuge to cover his head as a divine helmet in the day of battle.——Note how the logic of faith and hope are wrought into the very form of this prayer: "Grant not, O Lord, the desires of the wicked." Certainly God must have infinite reason for answering such a prayer favorably. His interests and sympathies are always *against* and never *for* granting the desires of wicked men. When the wicked pray to God according to their real heart, he can have no heart to grant their requests. They seek evil; God seeks good.——"Further not his wicked devices: they will be elated." This is all that David wrote in this clause; but the logical connection is obvious, viz., If thou shouldest, they will be proud of it; will carry their head high; will be overbearing and insolent, and perhaps he would imply also, will be all too strong for thy people to withstand.

9. *As for* the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.

10. Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.

11. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow *him*.

In v. 10 "deep pits" may mean deep waters, or pits full of water.——While David thanks the Lord for covering his head in the day of battle (v. 7), he prays that the heads of his enemies investing him round about, may be covered with the very mischief they sought to bring slanderously upon him. This form of punishment puts their case in contrast with his.

12. I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, *and* the right of the poor.

13. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

A precious confidence was this in David's heart, that the Lord would certainly maintain the cause of his own afflicted people—the right, *i. e.*, the righteous cause of the poor. Every element in his moral nature conspires to place God's sympathies on the side of the oppressed, against their unrighteous oppressors.

PSALM CXLI.

Bearing the name of David as author, this Psalm corresponds in its general course of thought with the preceding one, presenting

in their various phases his relations to his enemies on the one hand and to his God on the other.

1. LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

2. Let my prayer be set forth before thee *as* incense; *and* the lifting up of my hands *as* the evening sacrifice.

In the first clause of v. 2, the verb has normally the sense of being fixed, established, and consequently of being permanent. I take the sense here to be: Let my prayer ever be before thee as incense: let this be a fixed, invariable fact.——"The evening sacrifice" seem to have been pre-eminently the time for prayer and for the burning of incense, the fragrance of which was its symbol. Note the case of Ezra (9: 4, 5).

3. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

4. Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

"Incline not my heart to any evil thing," like the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation," must not be construed as assuming any danger or even moral possibility that God may tempt men to sin. It is rather a brief way of saying: Protect me by thy providence, guard me by thy Spirit, from being led into any evil thing.—— "Let me not eat the dainties of the wicked," in its moral application, covers not merely delicacies of food, tempting, poisonous; but all enticing seductions toward any sinful self-indulgence—temptation to any sin.

5. Let the righteous smite me; *it shall be* a kindness: and let him reprove me; *it shall be* an excellent oil, *which* shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also *shall be* in their calamities.

This verse is really difficult. The sentiment expressed in our English version is admirable; but it is hard to make the Hebrew words yield it, and hard also to bring it into any logical relations to the context. I must prefer this construction: "Let the Righteous One [God] smite me mercifully and let him rebuke me: [such] oil of the head, my head shall not refuse; for though repeated, my prayer will be [unto him] under their inflictions"—*i. e.*, under the inflictions of those wicked men whom God permits to afflict me for his ends of moral discipline.——In the context [vs. 3, 4] David puts himself under God's care for his own moral culture. V. 5 gives us one of the points of this culture, viz., the discipline that comes from the wicked through God's wise permission for good moral results.——As to the sense of particular words, "righteous" is said of one, not of many, and

certainly may refer to God, the Righteous One. The word for "kindness" is the common one for God's mercy, and may well be used adverbially. The verb which the English version translates, "shall not break," must have the sense *refuse*, as given above. In the last clause, "*their* calamities" can not well mean the calamities of one righteous person, but "*their*" must refer to the wicked as in the phrase "their dainties" (v. 4). Instead of meaning calamities suffered, it should be calamities or evils inflicted, *i. e.*, by the wicked.——The sentiment in the last clause is that a child of God may well afford to receive such moral discipline from God through the hand of wicked men because it is not only precious oil for the head [we should say, good for the *heart*] but it leaves to him the privilege and recourse of prayer.

6. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.

"When their judges" [the leading men of my wicked oppressors] "are hurled down into the hand of the rocks, they will hear my words, for they are sweet." Hurled down upon the point of the rocks, which in figure are supposed to receive the falling into their uplifted hands. Casting men headlong down a precipice upon the rocks beneath was one form of punishment, sometimes fatal, but not supposed to be altogether so in this case. The sense is—When judgments begin to fall heavily upon them, they will listen to my words (as they will not now), for they are really sweet, *i. e.*, rich in wholesome truth. The word "sweet" looks back to their *sweet* "dainties" (v. 4) and quietly suggests that his wise words were really sweet, while their words were only treacherously, poisonously so.

7. Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth *wood* upon the earth.

The translation of this verse should be improved, thus: "As one plows and cleaves furrows in the earth, our bones are scattered at the mouth of Sheol"—this plowing and turning up the soil, looking toward a rich harvest; corresponding to which, the bones of the righteous sown in the earth await a glorious harvest in "the resurrection of the just." As plowing and seed-sowing are done in quiet hope, so the just lay down their bones in glorious hope. ——There is no Hebrew word in the verse answering to "wood," and no verb that demands the sense of splitting wood rather than cleaving furrows. The Hebrew is *in* not *upon* the earth.

8. But mine eyes *are* unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.

9. Keep me from the snares *which* they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.

10. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

V. 8 should begin "*For*," not "But." "For" implies a logical connection, thus: I fear not to lay my bones with all thy saints at the mouth of Sheol; "*for* mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord." Yet David realizes the fitness of praying God to spare his life.——"Leave not my soul destitute," seems to mean—Pour not out my soul, *i. e.*, my life or life's blood. Remarkably this word is used of the Messiah (Isa. 53: 12): "poured out his soul unto death." See also Gen. 24: 20, and Isa. 32: 15.

PSALM CXLII.

"Maschil of David"—a Psalm by David for public instruction. "A prayer when he was in the cave," places this Psalm by the side of Ps. 57 and looks historically either to the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. 22: 1), or of Engedi (1 Sam. 24: 3). Yet perhaps it should be said that David may have been in more caves during the period of Saul's persecutions than the record specially mentions. It suffices that this Psalm refers to those experiences.

1. I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

2. I poured out my complaint before him; I showed before him my trouble.

The Hebrew reader would notice that all these verbs are future; "I *will* cry; *will* make supplication," etc. In writing this Psalm David throws himself back into those scenes and then says: At that moment I said, "I *will cry*," etc. This is his way of living those experiences over again in fresh remembrance, for grateful praise.

3. When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

4. I looked on *my* right hand, and beheld, but *there was* no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

In v. 4, David wrote, not "I looked," but "look ye" [every reader] "on my right hand," where a helper should stand; "see, there is not a man there to recognize me; refuge perished from me"—*i. e.*, no place for flight remained for me, etc. "No man cared for my life," *i. e.*, to preserve it; no one thought it worth caring for.

5. I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou *art* my refuge *and* my portion in the land of the living.

6. Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

7. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

In an emergency so extreme, whither should he fly or could he, but to his God only?——"Out of prison," in the metaphorical sense—said of himself shut up in the cave, from which for a time he dared not come out.——"The righteous will" [better than 'shall"] "gather about me, for thou wilt" [I am sure thou wilt] 'deal bountifully," *i. e.*, in goodness and mercy, "with me."

PSALM CXLIII.

This Psalm is closely related to Ps. 142; essentially a continuation. V. 4 here gives us the same significant words as v. 3 there: "My spirit overwhelmed within me."

1. Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, *and* in thy righteousness.

2. And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

The noticeable point here is that David prays to be answered on the basis of God's faithfulness and righteousness, while yet he deprecates being judged on the score of strict justice, and even says that no living man can abide such an ordeal and come forth justified. This moral attitude, this unique position between God's covenanted faithfulness and integrity, on the one hand, and his simple justice in the eye of law on the other, is by no means, unknown to Christian experience. It is the case of one conscious of imperfections, deeply sensible of being all unable to stand before God blameless in law; yet encouraged to take hold of divine promise because it *is* promise—of God's mercy because it *is* simple mercy—favor shown to those who have sinned and who are still conscious of moral weakness and short-comings.

3. For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.

4. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.

"For" introduces one ground of his plea—his extreme want; his utter helplessness before his enemies.

5. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.

6. I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul *thirsteth* after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

"I remember the days of old," my case then being far better than now. Canst not Thou, O my God, restore again to me such days of quiet and peace?——"I *will* muse" (future tense) "on the work of thy hands"—to find relief in the thought of what thou canst do for my help.——In the last clause of v. 6, we should read, "My soul is toward thee as a thirsty land," *i. e.*, bears the same relation to thee as the thirsty land does to the rain for which it pants, withering for the want thereof.

7. Hear me speedily, O LORD; my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

8. Cause me to hear thy loving-kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

9. Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.

In v. 7 are two distinct prayers, each followed by its own reason or ground. "Hear me, for my spirit faileth; hide not thy face from me, for I have already become like those that go down to the pit"—this last verb being in the past time. The English margin translates the Hebrew correctly.——"In the morning"—soon; close after this fearful night of darkness.——The last clause of v. 9 is a Hebrew idiom like this: Unto thee I cover myself, *i. e*, flying unto thee, I have [in thought] covered myself—in safety.

10. Teach me to do thy will; for thou *art* my God: thy Spirit *is* good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

11. Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

12. And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I *am* thy servant.

Most pertinently and beautifully [in the moral sense] David recognizes the truth that he can in nowise expect God's interposition to save his life and lead him to the throne of Israel save as his heart is upright—save as he is taught of God and lives under the guidance of his good Spirit. Hence this prayer.——"For I am thy servant" (v. 12) signifies, I am called of thee into this service to be the future leader of the people of Israel. All these life-perils from the jealousy of King Saul are occasioned by that very call which thou didst send me through thy prophet Samuel. Now, Lord, since thou hast called me into these perils and laid on me these responsibilities, wilt thou not bear me safely through them? May I not trust in thy faithfulness and love, and in thy

power to save? Surely, if thou dost but remember that I am thy servant, thou wilt not leave me to perish!

PSALM CXLIV.

The former part of this Psalm is almost a reproduction of Ps. 18, so many of its expressions are here and so much of its spirit. As that Psalm was composed after the Lord had delivered David from all his enemies and especially from Saul, so this seems to have the same occasion and purpose. Closely following a series (140–143) in which David and Saul are the prominent characters, and the experiences of the former under the persecutions of the latter are the great themes, this breaks forth in thanksgiving for gracious and complete deliverance wrought for him by his Almighty Redeemer. This deliverance having been wrought and David securely seated on the throne of Israel, it was appropriate for a great king over an agricultural people to think of sons growing up with stalwart strength; daughters polished in the graces and utilities befitting their sex; garners full; sheep in countless numbers; oxen strong for burdens; quietness and order combining to enhance the happiness of a people whose God is the faithful Jehovah of Israel.

1. Blessed *be* the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, *and* my fingers to fight:

2. My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and *he* in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

Comparing these verses with Ps. 18: 34, 2, the additional word here is "my goodness," literally, my mercy in the sense—the Giver of my mercies; the Source of my undeserved blessings.

3. LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him! *or* the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

4. Man is like to vanity: his days *are* as a shadow that passeth away.

Closely translated, we must read, "Lord, what is man—and [or yet] thou hast known him? the son of man—and [or yet] thou hast thought carefully of him?" These words appear for substance in Ps. 8; yet have a pertinent connection of thought here. How wonderful that God should think so kindly of man; should give him so much of his thought, his care, and his power to save, as this review of his mercies to me exhibits in my case! For man is only a breath, a shadow that soon passeth away.

5. Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

6. Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

7. Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children.

8. Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood.

Thus David had prayed under the fearful strain of his perils. The prayer is reproduced here (as in Ps. 18: 3, 6) to present in stronger light the wonders of God's redeeming mercy in answer. ——"From the hand of strange children" (here as in Ps. 18: 44, 45) refers to aliens, perhaps of the class of Doeg the Edomite. It would seem that Saul found the most manageable instruments for his malign purposes among men of foreign birth and of spirit alien from Hebrew sympathies. They were equal to any demand for falsehood or violence.

9. I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery *and* an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

10. *It is he* that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

A new song will celebrate these new mercies.——"A psaltery of ten strings"—one instrument is all that the Hebrew words call for here.——"The hurtful sword"—in the strong sense of death-bearing—the sword aimed at my life.

11. Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand *is* a right hand of falsehood:

12. That our sons *may be* as plants grown up in their youth; *that* our daughters *may be* as corner-stones, polished *after* the similitude of a palace:

"That our sons may be as grown-up plants even in their youth," *i. e.*, early reaching their maturity, and that, one of comely proportions and stalwart vigor.——"Our daughters as polished corner-stones for the building of the temple"—with reference to highly ornamented stones which appeared in the foundation of the model temple. Elegance and utility, the latter of most substantial sort, are admirably combined in this expressive comparison. We must admire David's profoundly just views of woman's sphere in society.

13. *That* our garners *may be* full, affording all manner of store; *that* our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:

14. *That* our oxen *may be* strong to labor; *that there be*

no breaking in, or going out: that *there be* no complaining in our streets.

15. Happy *is that* people, that is in such a case: *yea*, happy *is that* people, whose God *is* the LORD.

"Garners full, producing from sort to sort"—every variety of useful grain in abundance. "Oxen strong to bear"—this animal being in those days used for burden as well as for draft. "No breach and no going forth"—all safely kept and none escaping. "No outcry of distress" (perhaps not even of rudeness) "in our streets" or public squares. O how blessed the people who live so: how blessed the people whose God is Jehovah!

PSALM CXLV.

Very appropriately this is called David's "Praise-Psalm." The last from his pen in the Psalter, it groups together in lofty strains, from a full heart, the noblest utterances of praise; the richest testimonies to the universal benevolence of the Great Father.——The greater part of the terms and phrases of this Psalm have appeared in other Psalms, and need no additional comment here.

1. I will extol thee, my God, O King; and I will bless thy name forever and ever.

2. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name forever and ever.

3. Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness *is* unsearchable.

4. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

"One generation shall laud thy works to another"—fathers to their sons; the aged and those of mature years to the young, bearing their testimony to the great deeds of Jehovah so that this knowledge of what God has done, may pass down traditionally through all human generations. This is fully in harmony with the divine order—with the duties enjoined upon parents in the Mosaic law, and with the spirit of their commemorative institutions. See Deut. 4: 9, 10, and 6: 6, 7, and 11: 19, and Ps. 78: 3–7.

5. I will speak of the glorious honor of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

6. And *men* shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

7. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

In v. 5, I will *muse* is better than "speak" as being the primary and more usual sense of the Hebrew word. It suggests that these glorious qualities of God's character and deeds should be not merely talked about and extolled in song, but be deeply pondered, laid close upon our very heart, that so their legitimate impression may be wrought into our very soul, and may mold our whole spirit and character into God's own moral image.——"Terrible acts"—such as should inspire reverence and fear to sin.——"Abundantly utter" translates a word which properly means *to pour forth* as from a fountain, it being implied that men have these glorious deeds of their God so thoroughly in memory and heart that they need only open their lips and the praises of God pour forth.——"Righteousness," as often, not in the sense of mere justice, but nearly synonymous with goodness.

8. The LORD *is* gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

9. The LORD *is* good to all: and his tender mercies *are* over all his works.

10. All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

"All thy works shall praise thee" is a poetic conception, yet exquisitely beautiful and just. All nature, all the beneficent arrangements by which God clothes the earth with beauty and makes it minister to the sustenance and joy of all sentient beings—all have a voice to witness for God and proclaim his praise. How much more should thy saints to whom thou hast given intelligence to see and appreciate thy love pour forth their praises in honor of thy name!

11. They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

12. To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

13. Thy kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion *endureth* throughout all generations.

Under the general head of God's "kingdom" are grouped whatever pertains to his *moral* reign—his rule over intelligent beings by means of his law and the course of his providence. In this, God reveals his higher glories—the purest love of his nature, supreme wisdom, a most beneficent care of his dutiful children; justice also in defense of the oppressed and in retribution upon oppressors. This kingdom will long outlast this material world and its lower orders of sentient being. All along the lapse of its eternal ages, it will shine on with growing splendor and a purer glory.

14. The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all *those that be* bowed down.

15. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

16. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

"Upholdeth all that fall," who yet are supposed to be his people, trustful and obedient——"The eyes of all wait upon thee"—in hopeful expectation. The unintelligent animals are guided by what we call instinct—God's gift to them adapted to their constitution, under which they know where to look for their daily food. God does not deceive their expectations; is never reckless of their wants.

17. The LORD *is* righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

18. The LORD *is* nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.

19. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.

20. The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.

21. My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.

"Holy in all his works"—but in this case the word for "holy" looks not so much to the moral purity of his character or to his abhorrence of sin, as to his merciful kindness, his compassion.——"Nigh to those who call upon him *in truth*," makes "*in truth*" emphatic and suggests that sometimes men nominally, apparently, call upon God with no real sincerity, no sense of dependence, no feeling of want, no humble uplifting of the heart for his gracious help. To such callers, God is by no means nigh. The real call that rises from a full and earnest soul, a broken and humble spirit, he can never despise. The Psalmist defines their character as those that "fear him" and "love him."——Sublimely David closes with declaring his own personal purpose: "My mouth shall speak the praise of Jehovah"—now and evermore, with this mortal tongue and this human pen, now; and with my immortal song through the ages of the eternal future. And "let all flesh—all of human kind, men of every nation—bless his holy name forever—all along down the lapse of years till time shall be no more; and then begin their truly *everlasting* song!

PSALM CXLVI.

The remaining are all *Praise-songs*, each commencing with "Hallelujah"—*i. e.*, a call to all the people to praise the Lord. Noticeably this word belongs to the later Hebrew, not being found in

any Psalm ascribed to David, nor indeed in any of the Psalms of the first three books. In the Psalms of the age of the restoration, it occurs very frequently.——These five closing Psalms obviously belong to the age of the restoration. The Septuagint places at the head of the first four the words: Psalms "of Haggai and Zechariah."——They take up the strain of David's Psalm of praise (145); dwell largely on the same special points, yet add some new points growing out of their peculiar circumstances.

1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.
2. While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

The writer avows his own purpose to praise God, and gives words in the use of which every worshiper should feel himself specially invited to the same reasonable and glorious service.

3. Put not your trust in princes, *nor* in the son of man, in whom *there is* no help.
4. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Though princes, Cyrus especially and Darius also, have done us worthy service, yet many others have proved false, and none have served our Zion to any purpose save as "the Lord has stirred up their spirit" to it (Ezra. 1: 1). Therefore put not your trust in princes for help. At best their breath is soon gone, and they return to their mother earth as was said to our first father—"Unto dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3: 19).——In that day his thoughts, in the sense of plans or promises of help, must perish. The passage does not say that this man, dead, will think no more *in the future world*, but only that his thoughts as of one to be trusted for earthly help, will perish.

5. Happy *is he* that *hath* the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope *is* in the LORD his God:
6. Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein *is:* which keepeth truth forever:
7. Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:
8. The LORD openeth *the eyes of* the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:
9. The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and the widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

The God of Jacob has all the qualities requisite for a perfect Helper. The Maker of heaven and earth—how can he lack power

to help? Keeping truth forever and therefore faithful to every promise; "executing judgment for the oppressed," and therefore sure to help all who really need his helping hand; entering into every sort of real suffering with prompt and perfect sympathy—for the hungry, for the prisoner (like ourselves in Babylon); for the blind, the bowed down, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow—ah, indeed, where are the suffering sons of want for whom he has not a heart full of love and a hand laden with the very help they need?

10. The LORD shall reign forever, *even* thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

And the beauty and glory of the case is that this precious, munificent and righteous reign shall endure forever! The very God of Zion is to sit on the throne of the heavens and the earth through all generations. O give his name all praise!

PSALM CXLVII.

The four remaining Psalms have many points in common, and are obviously a series having the same general purpose. They are all admirably adapted to be sung upon the completion of the city walls, effected under the supervision of Nehemiah. They contain various expressions which indicate that joyous event.—— It was eminently fit that a series of such Psalms as these should close the entire collection. It need not be assumed that they were written for the purpose of rounding out the Psalter with superlative songs of praise. Rather, this is probable, viz., that having been prepared for the joyous celebration of completing the city walls, they were found eminently suitable for this place in the entire collection.

1. Praise ye the LORD: for *it is* good to sing praises unto our God; for *it is* pleasant; *and* praise is comely.

2. The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

3. He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

In verse 2 we might read, "Jehovah is the builder of Jerusalem;" this rebuilding, then fresh in their eyes, is the work of his hands. "He will gather the outcasts of Israel together;" his scattered captives he will restore to their native land and raise them again to a place of honor among the nations. The captives who sat by the rivers of Babylon and wept as they remembered Zion, the Lord has met in mercy, wiped their tears away, and bound up their heart-wounds.

4. He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by *their* names.

5. Great *is* our Lord, and of great power: his understanding *is* infinite.

6. The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

It is in place to celebrate the greatness and majesty of our Deliverer. The Great God of nature—he knows the stars by name; has boundless power and infinite wisdom, and withal he executes judgment in lifting up the humble and hurling down the proud.

7. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:

8. Who covereth the heavens with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

9. He giveth to the beast his food, *and* to the young ravens which cry.

One of the most prominent and striking features of this series of Psalms is the continual blending of God's agencies in nature with his works in his providential government. In the former he gives the rain of heaven and the grass on the mountains; in the latter, he builds Jerusalem, restores the exiles, visits retribution of good or evil upon saints and sinners as they deserve. It seems to be a special aim with the writer [and with the inditing Spirit] to impress the great truth that the same God doeth all these things.

10. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.

11. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

This antithesis is striking. In the mind of God the things of interest are not the power of the war-horse or of the war-man; but rather, the reverent fear and the humble faith of his people. All unlike the estimate which men of the world form, these moral qualities are his admiration.

12. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.

13. For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.

14. He maketh peace *in* thy borders, *and* filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

These verses refer pointedly to the times of Nehemiah when, after scenes of no small peril and of immense labor, the walls were finished, the gates made strong, and the joyous people celebrated

their rebuilt city with grateful songs. Plentiful harvests were another occasion for thanksgiving.

15. He sendeth forth his commandment *upon* earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

16. He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.

17. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

18. He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, *and* the waters flow.

"Sending forth his *commandment*," "his *word* running very swiftly"—harmonize in conception and phrase with what is said of God's creative power: "He *spake* and it was done; he *commanded*, and it stood fast." God's agencies in nature are supposed to be sent forth in and by his word. He commands, and the rains come; he sends forth his word, and genial suns send down their heat. He speaks, and snow, ice, hail, and fearful cold are abroad on the face of the earth. Again, he sendeth forth his word and melteth them.——There may be a tacit allusion to the winter of their bondage in Babylon—now at length followed by the warm breath of spring, melting the frost-bands and opening the warm bosom of their home-land to welcome their return.

19. He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

20. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and *as for his* judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

The other and more usual sense of "word" appears here. The Psalmist sets forth the peculiar favor shown to Israel in the gift from the Lord of his statutes and judgments, *i. e.*, laws, moral, civil, and religious, including institutions and ordinances for the moral culture of the people. No other nation had ever been so favored.

PSALM CXLVIII.

The great Hallelujah chorus rises in this Psalm to a loftier strain, calling upon all that is in the heavens (other than God) and all that is upon the earth to unite in extolling the Great God with highest praises. With noticeable method and order vs. 1–6 group together the details of the upper, heavenly world; while vs. 7–14, in like manner, seize upon the salient points of this earthly sphere—first, the inanimate and the unintelligent orders; and lastly, the intelligent.

1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.
2. Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him all his hosts.
3. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.
4. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that *be* above the heavens.
5. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded and they were created.
6. He hath also established them forever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

In v. 2, "hosts" is ambiguous, being applied either to the intelligent creatures or to the non-intelligent objects of the upper world. The Psalmist's general purpose did not require a nice discrimination on this point. He calls on both classes for praise—seraphs, principalities, and powers in the heavenly places; and also, stars, suns, every object known to man or unknown, in the worlds above.——"Ye waters that be above the heavens" conforms to the current views of the ancients, which appear Gen. 1: 6, 7, and more than once in the Psalms. Let all these heavenly bodies praise the name of Jehovah for by his word they came into being, and under his changeless laws they hold their place and fulfill their mission.

7. Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:
8. Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling his word:
9. Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:
10. Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

In v. 8 the clause, "fulfilling his word," may legitimately apply not to "stormy wind" only, but to "fire and hail:" "snow and vapor." All alike and all most perfectly obey his high behest and know no will but his. Let them all therefore join in his exalted praises.

11. Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:
12. Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:
13. Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory *is* above the earth and heaven.

In the great human family, the loftiest are by no means to be exempted. Rather let those be named first of all. "Kings of the

earth;" "princes and all judges;" let them remember *Him* who is infinitely above them; to whom they are supremely amenable; from whose creative hand they have their very existence and whose providence has raised them to a little brief authority over their fellows.——Let all these classes of intelligent beings of the human race combine to praise the name of the Lord, for his name only is excellent—the word "name" indicating his nature, the qualities or attributes of his character. His excellence towers high above both earth and heaven. Compared with his infinite being, the universe of his works is only a very little thing!

14. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; *even* of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

"The horn of his people," here as usual, the emblem of strength—the sense being that in restoring his people to their father-land, and now in prospering them to complete the rebuilding of their city walls, he had once more lifted them to power—above contempt, and even to respectability before the nations of the earth.——The clause, "The praise of all his saints," must depend grammatically on the first verb, "exalteth," with this sense: He hath lifted on high the praises of his people—giving them occasion by his manifold and especially his then recent mercies to praise his name in loftiest strains. Therefore let them unite in this grand and most sublime *Hallelujah!*

PSALM CXLIX.

This part of the great Hallelujah chorus applies specially to God's people, continuing and expanding the theme which was reached in the closing verses of Ps. 148. The relation of God's people to himself is the main subject.

1. Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, *and* his praise in the congregation of saints.

2. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the chil dren of Zion be joyful in their King.

3. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

A "new song" celebrates new mercies—in the present case, the mercies of God to his recently restored people, consummated in the rebuilding of their city walls. That this was regarded at the time as furnishing rich occasion for praise may be seen in the history (Neh. 12: 27–43): "At the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem, they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanks-

giving and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps," etc.——"Let them praise his name in the dance"—or with the dance, this being then a recognized mode of expressing their joy in God. The reader will recall the scenes when David brought up the ark to Mt. Zion (2 Sam. 6: 14–16). See also Ps. 30: 11.

4. For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

5. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

"The Lord is pleased to accept his people" [Hebrew]—the verb being in common use for the Lord's acceptance of sacrifices offered in sincerity, and therefore would suggest to any Hebrew mind the ground of this acceptance or "pleasure"—not their worthiness alone but in connection with forgiveness bought with blood.—— "Let the saints be joyful in glory," *i. e.*, in the honor now conferred upon them and upon Zion. "Let them sing aloud upon their beds," *i. e.*, at their homes, in their retired hours as well as in public: with perhaps a tacit allusion to their previous trials in which many a pillow had been wet with tears.

6. *Let* the high *praises* of God *be* in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;

7. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, *and* punishments upon the people;

8. To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

9. To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

"God's praises in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hand"—for they were fresh from the wall-building of the city in which "they who builded on the wall and they that bare burdens, with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon" (Neh. 4: 17). The whole passage looks back probably to the commission which God gave Israel to drive out the idolatrous Canaanites. So far as the *letter* of it is concerned, its form comes from the past, though in the *spirit* thereof its outlook may be into the future—the bloodless victories of truth over the hearts of the King's enemies. In the interpretation of this passage it would be quite unauthorized to ignore the great facts of the early history of Israel on the one hand, and not less so on the other hand to ignore the great facts of the future age, set forth even then in prophecy and fulfilled in the Gospel era under the Prince of Peace who gives his people only "the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God." The letter of our passage comes from the former; the spirit and the present meaning are amply revealed in the latter.

PSALM CL.

The scope of this short, closing Psalm is a model of simplicity, beauty and power. Praise the Lord—where? (v. 1); for what? (v. 2); with what? (vs. 3–5); and finally, upon whom is the call made? (v. 6).

1. Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power.
2. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.
3. Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.
4. Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
5. Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
6. Let everything that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

Praise him in his sanctuary below; in his glorious firmament above—comprehensively put for his entire universe. Praise him for the great things he has done and for the very greatness itself which belongs to him as God over all.——Then bring together all the instruments of music known to human art. All are too mean to speak his praises as they deserve.——And finally, let the whole animate creation; all the living; let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. Poetically considered, it is charming to call upon the silent spheres above; and below, upon mountains, and all hills, fire and hail, snow and vapor, the windy storm and the loud-voiced thunder, to join the grand chorus of universal praise; yet in plain speech and to sober thought, we reach the height of duty and the perfect statement of it when we say: Let everything that hath breath and the voluntary power to use it, pour forth that breath in grateful songs of praise to Jehovah, Father, Maker, Lord of all!

BRIEF SUMMARY OF

The Historical Points of the Several Psalms, viz., their Author, date and occasion.

The first Book of the Psalter comprises Psalms 1–41. All these Psalms are, on good authority, ascribed to David as their author.

Ps. I. Perhaps prepared as an introduction to Book I.
Ps. II. Probably written after the prophetic announcement by Nathan (2 Sam. 7).
Ps. III—VII. Probably all refer to the times of Absalom's conspiracy.
Ps. VIII. Date unknown. Probably subsequent to the prophecy of 2 Sam. 7.
Ps. IX. During his national wars; after some victories, and while other conflicts were pending.
Ps. X. Same date as Ps. IX.
Ps. XI. May refer either to the times of Saul or the times of Absalom.
Ps. XII. No certain date indicated.
Ps. XIII. Makes no allusions to historic circumstances, but gives experiences under severe trials.
Ps. XIV. Perhaps suggested by the case of Nabal of Mt. Carmel (1 Sam. 25).
Ps. XV. Same date with Ps. 24: on occasion of bringing up the ark to Mt. Zion (2 Sam. 6: and 1 Chron. 13).
Ps. XVI. Probably dates *after* the revelations made to David; as in 2 Sam. 7.
Ps. XVII. Apparently looks to his sufferings from Saul.
Ps. XVIII. *After* his deliverance from all his enemies and from Saul.
Ps. XIX. No historic occasion.
Ps. XX. Upon going out to war against Ammon and Syria combined (2 Sam. 10: 6–19, and 1 Chron. 19: 6–19).
Ps. XXI. Shortly after Ps. 20: on occasion of victories in answer to those prayers.
Ps. XXII. Of a class with Ps. 16: having no special reference to historic events.
Ps. XXIII. *After* his persecutions from Saul, and while yet he needed the care of the Good Shepherd.

Ps. XXIV. Upon the location of the ark on Mt. Zion; as in 2 Sam. 6:

Ps. XXV.—XXIX. Prepared soon after the location of the ark on Mt. Zion and the more ample use of song in the sanctuary service.

Ps. XXX. The occasion appears in 2 Sam. 24, and 1 Chron. 21: the location of the great temple after the staying of the plague.

Ps. XXXI. Perhaps alludes the scenes of 1 Sam. 23—David's signal escape from Saul.

Ps. XXXII. David, after his great sin in the matter of Uriah and Bathsheba—at a stage somewhat earlier than Ps. 51.

Ps. XXXIII. Shortly subsequent to Ps. 32—celebrating the joys and expressing the gratitude and praise of the true penitent.

Ps. XXXIV. David before Achish of Gath; as in 1 Sam. 21: 10–15.

Ps. XXXV. Closely related to Ps. 34, and to 1 Sam. 24—when David spared the life of Saul.

Ps. XXXVI. Its occasion may have been some striking manifestation of depravity.

Ps. XXXVII. Its views of men are not special but general.

Ps. XXXVIII.—XLI. The conspiracy of Adonijah—in David's extreme old age (1 Kings 1:)

BOOK II.

[Viz., Ps. 42–72.]

Of these thirty-one Psalms, eight may be assigned to the sons of Korah—(42–49); one (Ps. 50) to Asaph; nineteen to David; viz., Ps. 51–65, and Ps. 68–71; two are anonymous, viz., Ps. 66 and 67, and one (Ps. 72) is by Solomon.

Ps. XLII.—XLIII. A pair; with little if any doubt, the experiences of David driven from home and throne by Absalom.

Ps. XLIV. Date and occasion uncertain; possibly the same as Ps. 60; probably during the reign of the later kings of Judah.

Ps. XLV. Date, during the reign of Solomon; later than the "Song of Solomon."

Ps. XLVI. With great probability, in the times of Hezekiah and Sennacherib.

Ps. XLVII. The reign of Jehoshaphat; his kingdom invaded by Moab, Ammon and Edom (2 Chron. 20).

Ps. XLVIII. Same date as Ps. 47: one sung on the field of battle (2 Chron. 20: 26); the other after their return, victorious, to Jerusalem (vs. 27, 28).

Ps. XLIX. No special allusion to history; but a generalization from a mass of observed facts.

Ps. L. An ideal judgment scene, illustrating God's retribution on the wicked.

Ps. LI. David's conviction and penitence for his sin in the case of Uriah and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11 and 12).
Ps. LII. David and Doeg (1 Sam. 21 and 22).
Ps. LIII. Repeats Ps. 14 with slight variations.
Ps. LIV. David and the Ziphites; (1 Sam. 23: 19 and 26: 1).
Ps. LV. Probably of the times of Saul, it being located among Psalms of that sort.
Ps. LVI. David and the Philistines of Gath (1 Sam. 21: 10–12).
Ps. LVII. David fleeing before Saul secretes himself in caves: (1 Sam. 22: 1, and 24: 1).
Ps. LVIII. Probably dating with those that precede and the next that follows—in the reign of Saul.
Ps. LIX. Sauline; (1 Sam. 19: 11–17).
Ps. LX. The great war against Syria and Edom (2 Sam. 8, and 1 Chron. 18).
Ps. LXI. Probably the times of Absalom.
Ps. LXII. Probably of the times of Saul; though possibly, of Absalom.
Ps. LXIII. With great probability, the times of Absalom.
Ps. LXIV. The times of Absalom and Ahithophel.
Ps. LXV. Thanksgiving for victory over the revolt of Absalom and for fruitful seasons.
Ps. LXVI. Probably the same as Ps. 65.
Ps. LXVII. Thanksgiving for bountiful harvests; occasion not otherwise suggested.
Ps. LXVIII. Probably celebrates the great victory over Rabbah and the Ammonites. (2 Sam. 12: 26–31).
Ps. LXIX. Conspiracy of Adonijah; David's old age and debility (1 Kings 1).
Ps. LXX. Identical with the last paragraph of Ps. 40: times of Adonijah.
Ps. LXXI. A continuation of Ps. 70; for the times of Adonijah.
Ps. LXXII. By Solomon; probably early in his life.

BOOK III.

Seventeen Psalms, viz., Ps. 73–89. Of these, eleven (Ps. 73–83) are assigned to Asaph; four (Ps. 84, 85, 87, 88) to the sons of Korah; one (Ps. 86) to David; and one (Ps. 89) to Ethan.

Ps. LXXIII. Drawn from general history rather than special; of course, having no historic reference for its date or occasion.
Ps. LXXIV. Destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans.
Ps. LXXV. Times of Hezekiah and Sennacherib (2 Kings 19, and Isa. 37).
Ps. LXXVI. Same as Ps. 75.
Ps. LXXVII. At some point between the revolt and the captivity, not definitely indicated, but a time of sore trial.
Ps. LXXVIII. Either the time of David's reign over Judah only

(2 Sam. 2–5) or the war between Abijah and Jeroboam (2 Chron. 13).

Ps. LXXIX. Same date and occasion with Ps. 74, the fall of the city before the Chaldeans.

Ps. LXXX. Contemplates the calamities brought upon the Northern kingdom, first by the Syrians; last by Shalmaneser of Assyria.

Ps. LXXXI. Nearly the same date as Ps. 80; a solemn appeal to the people of the ten tribes to return to their God.

Ps. LXXXII. Probably contemplates the perversions of justice prevalent in the Northern kingdom shortly before its final fall.

Ps. LXXXIII. The great combination against Judah in the times of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20).

Ps. LXXXIV. The first year of Hezekiah; his invitation to the people of the ten tribes to keep the feast at Jerusalem.

Ps. LXXXV. The great revival under Hezekiah.

Ps. LXXXVI. Ascribed to David; placed here by the compilers, because adapted to the times of Hezekiah.

Ps. LXXXVII. Upon the destruction of the great Assyrian host (2 K. 19, and Isa. 37).

Ps. LXXXVIII, LXXXIX. Both of the times of Hezekiah.

BOOK IV.

Seventeen Psalms, viz., Ps. 90–106. Of these, two (101 and 103) are ascribed to David; one (99), to Moses. The rest are anonymous. Perhaps the authors were themselves the compilers and therefore omitted their names. Many of these Psalms belong to the age of Josiah and his great reformation.

Ps. XC. By Moses; shortly before his death.

Ps. XCI. Perhaps by Moses; doubtless as a counterpart to Ps 90.

Ps. XCII, XCIII. Pertinent to the reformation under Josiah.

Ps. XCIV. Refers probably to the wicked reigns of the last kings of Judah.

Ps. XCV—C. Both their adaptations and their sentiments assign these Psalms to the times of Josiah.

Ps. CI. Ascribed to David; but appropriate to the young king Josiah and therefore here. See Notes introductory to this Psalm.

Ps. CII. Probably by Jeremiah; of his times.

Ps. CIII. Ascribed to David.

Ps. CIV, CV. Times of Josiah's reformation.

Ps. CVI. Perhaps in view of the first deportation of captives to Babylon

BOOK V.

Forty-four Psalms, viz., Ps. 107–150. Of these, fifteen are ascribed to David, viz., Ps. 108–110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138–145;

one to Solomon (Ps. 127): all the rest are anonymous, and appear to have been written and all compiled in the age of the Restoration.

Ps. CVII. After the return of the exiles from Babylon, celebrating the great mercy of God in that restoration. See Notes introductory to this Psalm.

Ps. CVIII. Ascribed to David; but made up of two selections, viz., from Ps. 57 and 60.

Ps. CIX. Ascribed to David. His personal enemy alluded to may have been Saul, or Absalom, or possibly Ahithophel.

Ps. CX. By David; corresponds with Ps. 2.

Ps. CXI—CXIII. A triplet of Praise-Psalms of the age of the Restoration.

Ps. CXIV, CXV. Soon after the return of the exiles; during the period of struggle against powerful enemies.

Ps. CXVI. After the rebuilding of the temple.

Ps. CXVII. Perhaps a doxology to Ps. 116.

Ps. CXVIII. For the dedication of the second temple (Ezra 6: 16–20).

Ps. CXIX. Very probably by Ezra—this conjecture resting upon his great familiarity with the Scriptures and love for them; and upon the harmony between his life among slanderous, powerful enemies, and the frequent allusions to such enemies in this Psalm.

Ps. CXX—CXXXIV. Fifteen songs of the ascents or up-goings, all adapted to be sung by the exiles returning to Jerusalem, or, more generally, by the people going up to the holy city to attend their yearly festivals.

Ps. CXXXV. Praise-Psalm, to be sung after their arrival in Jerusalem.

Ps. CXXXVI. Very probably composed for the occasion of laying the foundations of the temple (Ezra 3: 10, 11).

Ps. CXXXVII. Soon after the return of the exiles from Babylon—a reminiscence to awaken gratitude and praise.

Ps. CXXXVIII—CXLV. Eight Psalms ascribed to David, yet with manifest adaptations to the age of the Restoration.

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